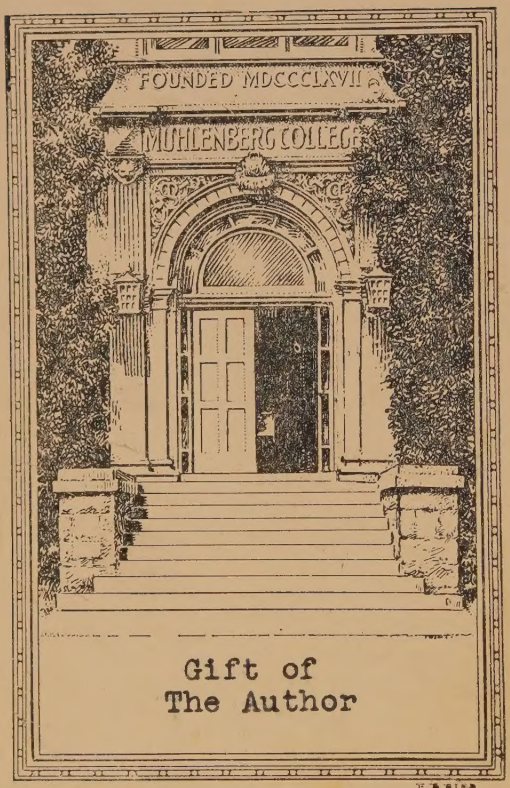
MARTIN LUTHER

BY

ELSIE SINGMASTER



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HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
BOSTON AND NEW YORK

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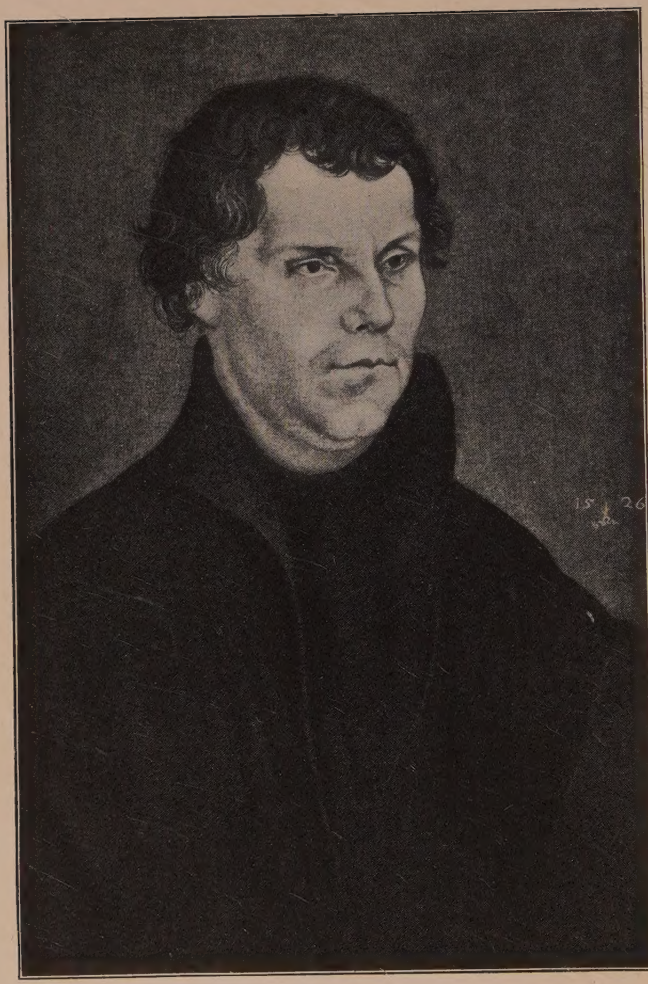
Published March 1917

THIRD IMPRESSION

32601



Martinus Luther

TO

JOHN ALDEN SINGMASTER, D.D.

PREFACE

The author offers this brief Life of Martin Luther as her contribution to the literature of the Four Hundredth Anniversary of the Reformation. The volume contains no original material, but is intended to serve as an introduction to the longer, richer, and more scholarly records of a great life which abound and to the noble writings of the Reformer himself. Grateful acknowledgment is made to the biographers of Luther, especially to Dr. Henry E. Jacobs, to Dr. Preserved Smith, and to Heinrich Böhmer, the author of *Luther in the Light of Recent Research.*

January, 1917.

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MARTIN LUTHER

CHAPTER I

YOUTH

In his parting discourse our Lord commanded his disciples to carry his gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth. Late in the sixth century, Pope Gregory I, obeying the divine command, sent the monk Augustine with a band of forty companions to persuade the Angles and Saxons to become Christians. The Pope, while yet a bishop, had seen in the Roman slave market fair blue-eyed captives from distant Britain. "They are not Angles," said he, "but Angels, and it becomes such to become co-heirs with the angels in heaven."

In a few years the English Church had grown to be the glory of Western Christendom, not only for its spiritual unity, its fine organization, its learning, but because of its many missionary enterprises. The most famous of its missionaries was Wynfrith or Boniface, the "Apostle to Germany." Devoted to Rome, diligent and

truly evangelical, he overturned idols, preached against heathenish superstition, built churches and monasteries, and carefully instructed his converts. In 754 he and his companions were massacred by the heathen on the shores of the North Sea.

About seven hundred years later, on the 10th of November, 1483, there was born at Eisleben, a village in Thuringia, a part of Boniface's mission field, Martin Luther.

The Germany of 1483, though no longer merely an aggregation of forest tribes, was not yet a nation but a loose coalition of independent states which gave to the House of Hapsburg the imperial title. Under the greatest Hapsburg, Maximilian I, who ascended the throne in 1493, was first to be seen a strong tendency to union and centralization.

A union might have been consummated many centuries before it came about had not the German rulers been ever more concerned with campaigns for foreign conquest than for the welfare of their own kingdom. While England, France, and Spain were growing into distinct nations, the German states, devoted to the imperial idea and divided by internal jealousies, remained apart. Within them the free cities, in-

sisting upon their rights and disputing with nobles and princes, constituted another element of independence, another obstacle to union. In addition the great spiritual states, answerable only to the Pope, opposed all interests but their own.

In the cities German life was most rich and varied and the German spirit most free. Here, churches, public buildings of all kinds in the Gothic style, towered city walls and private houses with tall, peaked roofs and projecting stories, delighted the artist's eye. Here the great guilds provided for the laboring-man a life as interesting and varied as that of the noble. Here was to be found the most keen and active intellectual life. The Minnesingers were gone, but didactic and satiric poets had taken their place and the Meistersingers were beginning to express the sturdy and cheerful life of the artisan.

Outside of the cities existence was for the most part dull and bitter, especially among the poor, upon whom was laid an insupportable burden of taxes. The forests might abound in game, but the peasant was not permitted to hunt; the streams be filled with fish, but he dared not cast a line. Sometimes an enemy sowed weeds in productive fields so as to make them useless,

and frequently he destroyed the ripened crops. A love of adventure carried about the country thousands who neither possessed nor desired a home, and who by their vagrant life and moral looseness influenced disastrously the character of the people.

To add to the confusion of spirit a hideous pestilence visited Europe in the fourteenth century, the "Black Death," carried thither from the East. Few authentic statistics of its destruction remain, but it is the opinion of conservative historians that one fourth of the inhabitants of Europe and one half of the inhabitants of Germany perished. Upon the remnant the effect was appalling. All restraint was thrown aside, all moral obligation forgotten. As in France and other countries, so in Germany, Jews were tortured and murdered by the thousand because the terrified and ignorant populace held them responsible for the calamity. A widespread religious movement seemed about to start under the terror of the plague, but when the plague ended the anxiety of men about their souls ended also.

In the vast ecclesiastical circle, that segment which was first traced by the hand of Boniface had never been so closely bound to the center as

many other portions of the Church. Independent and freedom-loving, insisting upon the right of private judgment, the Germans, who had never united into a real nation, had still less allowed themselves to come entirely under the domination of the See of Rome which controlled and shaped the course of the Christian Church and had made its bishop Pope. While there were gradually imposed upon the Germans the superstition, the useless and worse than useless ordinances of the Roman Church, there persisted a true evangelical religion which found its expression in writings like those of Tauler and the author of "A German Theology." The unwillingness of many hearts to accept in their entirety the teachings of Rome and their horror at her corruption are seen in the eagerness with which they enlisted under the banner of reform when it was once lifted.

That the Church had forgotten the behests of her great Founder may be proved from her own records. The plain and simple teaching of Christ had been overlaid and obscured by misconception and perversion. Men went no longer directly to the Scriptures for the source and authority for their belief, and they applied no more directly in faith to Christ for the healing

of their souls. Generations of theologians had believed and had taught that man could win God's forgiveness for sin by his own good works, — his penances, his fasts, his journeys to sacred shrines, his gifts to charity and to the Church, and his own holiness of life, — whereas the Founder of the Church had taught that man was forgiven solely because of his faith in Christ.

Each great or small departure from the pure doctrine of the early Church had brought about evils peculiar to itself. The acceptance of the Pope as the Vicar of Christ, with sole power to bind and loose, with spiritual and temporal overlordship in all the world, not only made men slaves, but bred dangerous confusion in the minds which saw a human being, fallible, sometimes immoral and even basely corrupt, in a position so lofty and so powerful. The seven sacraments, administrable only by the clergy and supposed to be necessary for man's salvation, became the instruments of an almost unendurable tyranny. The doctrine of transubstantiation gave rise to sensual and gross ideas of a holy mystery. The confession required of the laity put the conscientious into the power of an ignorant and sometimes evil priesthood, and did not profit the indifferent or wicked. The

celibacy of the clergy, the exaltation of a life of so-called "chastity," resulted harmfully, not only in the reproach which it cast upon married life, but in the evils arising from the suppression of the natural affections of the human heart. The monasteries, which had blessed the world with many saints and uncounted deeds of charity and mercy, and which had performed a noble work in the preservation of learning which would otherwise have perished, frequently sheltered large numbers of shameless men who, separated from the world, idle, deprived of the occupations natural to mankind, became a menace instead of a blessing.

The enormous wealth of the Church founded upon her landed possessions and increased by tribute from every hamlet of the Christian world, her luxury and her pomp had been for many years sharply condemned by protesting though devoted sons. In the twelfth century St. Bernard held before the Papacy "the mirror in which it could recognize its deformities." Said he: "I do not find that St. Peter ever appeared in public loaded with jewels and clad in silk, mounted on a white mule, surrounded by soldiers, and followed by a brilliant retinue. In the glitter that environs thee, rather wouldst

thou be taken for the successor of Constantine than for the successor of Peter." Warning the Pope against lust for power, he reminded him that he was "a man, naked, poor, miserable, made for toil and not for honors."

Among the new and growing abuses were the worship of the Virgin Mary and the saints and the reverencing of countless and often revolting relics of which churches boasted, pieces of bone, locks of hair, or bits of wood and stone to which was attributed not only a holy history, but miraculous power to heal. The opening of the catacombs created a supply of fragments of the human body so great that individual churches counted their gruesome treasures by the thousand and collected vast sums from those who came to gaze upon them and to pay them honor.

Another abuse which grew to large proportions, and which was the source of great wealth to the Church and the reason for great scandal, was the selling of so-called "indulgences." In the early Church the wrongdoer confessed his sins in the presence of the congregation and accompanied his confession with a promise to perform certain acts to prove his penitence. Later, private confession took the place of pub-

lic confession, and penances, such as fasting, or a journey to a distant shrine, were imposed by the priest. Still later, prayers, almsgiving, or even the paying of money were substituted for more burdensome tasks. Such penalties were supposed to free only from those punishments which the Church imposed on earth; they could not release the soul from the punishments appointed by God.

Finally the ignorant laity, uncorrected by an ignorant priesthood, attributed an almost unlimited power to the indulgences or pardons which one could buy. Not only did the indulgence cover the sins of the past, but those of the future; not only did it free from ecclesiastical punishment, but from punishment in purgatory. Contrition ceased in the minds of many men to be a part of the process by which one secured forgiveness; all that was required was the appointed sum of money.

The Bible was a sealed book, not by any fiat of the Church, but because it was regarded with indifference. Theologians had interpreted it with such skill and perspicuity that their comments were believed to be more valuable for the priest than acquaintance with the original. In far greater degree was the interpretation of the

Church all that the layman needed to concern himself with.

Thus by human authority and by the power of superstition, and not by love and reasonable faith, did the Church rule her subjects.

In all parts of Christendom there were signs of an approaching revolt, signs which were at first unheeded, then quenched by all the power of the Church's wide-reaching arms. In England Wycliffe, "the Morning Star of the Reformation," translated the entire Bible into the English tongue. His translation, widely circulated in manuscript copies, was diligently read. When his doctrines reached Bohemia, John Huss, who received them and began to spread them abroad, was burned at the stake. Later, another convert, Jerome of Prague, met a similar fate, and many others were cruelly persecuted and slain. In Italy, Savonarola, an earnest preacher of righteousness who pleaded for a reform within the Church, was executed and his body burned. In the south of France the Albigenses paid with their lives for doubting the infallibility of the Pope. Everywhere the theory that laymen might rule where only priests had ruled was gaining credence, and here and there peasant uprisings, as yet feeble and unorgan-

ized, were showing that even the serf had begun to think. The young nations became more and more unwilling to allow the Church to exercise that control over their affairs which she claimed as her right. Between the Pope and Germany especially there was constant irritation and strife.

There came about through Europe at this time a great awakening and quickening of the human mind, as though a Spirit of Enlightenment had touched the nations with a magic wand. The various phases of this awakening are so closely related that none can be said to be the cause or the effect of any other, but all are parts of a vast movement. Great stores of valuable scientific knowledge were opened to the West by the Saracens. The lost and forgotten writings of Greece and Rome were once more read and admired. The modern languages which were taking shape offered a new vehicle for fresh literature. The invention of printing from type and the substitution of paper for parchment made possible the broad spreading of knowledge of all kinds.

Upon the spiritual rule of the Pope this searching after knowledge had an incalculable effect. Men thought more, they began to com-

pare with the mediæval formulas of Rome the scientific theories of which they heard now for the first time. The printing-press enabled those bold thinkers who questioned the worship of the Virgin Mary, the use of images, and the confession to a priest to spread their objections widely. The moral standards of the Church were attacked, and her purification was freely discussed. But the discussion was for the most part that of private conversation. Against the evils which many deplored few dared to lift a public voice.

Into the Church as well as into the world was now born Martin Luther, the son of peasants, Hans and Margareta (Ziegler) Luther. His birthplace, Eisleben, was the principal village in the thickly forested county of Mansfield in the Duchy of Thuringia, where his father operated a small furnace for the smelting of copper. On the second day of his life the little boy was baptized in the Church of St. Peter and St. Paul, being given the name Martin in honor of the saint whose day it was.

The Luthers were poor; indeed, in their early married life only the narrowest of margins separated them from want. They had, however, as much as their neighbors, and their hearts were

content. Their house was tiny; its windows were filled with horn and not with glass, and its floor was of earth. When Margareta went to the forest for wood for her fire, it was probably with no complaint, but with rejoicing that there was wood to be had.

Their honesty and industry were presently rewarded by a fair measure of success. When Martin was six months old, his father left Eisleben for Mansfield, where he expected to better his fortunes, and here he and his wife lived until their death. From the renter of a single furnace, Hans came to be the owner of two. The Counts of Mansfield respected him and he was made a member of the village council. Beside being honest and industrious, he was full of common sense and sturdy independence, traits which were a part of the inheritance which he gave his son. This independence was shown in his attitude toward the Church and the priests. When he was urged during an illness to leave money to the Church, he answered that he would leave his money to his children who needed it more.

Margareta was a true daughter of the Church. To her every monk was a holy man, every transgression of the rules of the Church a transgression of the laws of God. She was not only pious,

but deeply superstitious. The strange and awful dwellers in the Thuringian woods, which crowded close upon the little town, — gnomes, demons, and evil spirits, — had not been wholly banished by the good Boniface, but were still likely to threaten those who stayed too late away from home. Beneath the ground were the dim caverns of the mines, where even the Evil One himself might dwell. Fear of the Turk and a lingering terror of the plague found place also in the heart of Margareta and were by her impressed upon her children. Nevertheless she was a cheerful soul, who told her little boy again and again, "If the world smiles not on you and me, the fault is ours."

To Martin she taught the simple faith which the peasants cherished, that faith which was to be kindled in his keeping from a spark to an enlightening flame. He learned the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and a few simple hymns. He learned to respect the holy monks, to reverence the Holy Father in distant and sacred Rome, and to gaze with trembling awe upon the fragments of the skeletons of saints and the tiny pieces of their garments. He learned that God and Christ were stern judges, who looked with loathing upon sin, who could be placated

by pilgrimages and penances, and who could be best served in monasteries and convents. He saw in the church at Mansfield a painted window which represented Christ, armed with a sword, his face stern, coming to judge the world. Deep in his heart there lay constantly a fear that he would have no happy fate in that day.

Like other children of pious parents he was trained with the most careful strictness. Both at home and at school he was punished with the rod. He records that his mother, who loved him so dearly, beat him until the blood came for having taken a nut from the household stores. He tells also of fifteen whippings received during one morning in school. It is a relief to remember that he was in youth, as well as in later life, full of a mischievous playfulness and that the beatings could not all have been severe. To his parents he gave the warmest affection as long as they lived, therefore their punishments were not so terrible as to leave him bitter or unfilial.

Until he was thirteen years old he attended school at Mansfield. The lower schools were everywhere poor; Martin described them afterwards as "hell and purgatory" and their examinations as trials for murder. The children

spent a long time learning the little Latin which was the chief subject of instruction.

If he had ever wished to leave school and its stern and stupid master, he would have received no encouragement from home. For his boy, Hans Luther had a great ambition. He himself had been a miner, but his son was to have a profession, the law, and was to become a man of influence. All the future was clear even to the day when Martin should establish himself with a rich wife selected by his father and should become magistrate of Mansfield.

When Martin was thirteen he was sent to Magdeburg to school. Here he was a "poor student," that is, he had the sort of free scholarship which the schools of the day offered. He paid neither rent nor tuition and was given the privilege of begging his bread in the streets. In turn, he sang as a chorister in the church. Of the experiences of the year we know little except that his life was hard and that he had a severe illness. It is probable that his learning was not much increased.

Various events which he spoke of afterwards strengthened the deep concern of his heart for his salvation. In the streets of Magdeburg he saw "with my own eyes"—so he writes—

"a Prince of Anhalt who went in a friar's cowl on the highways to beg bread, and carried a sack like a donkey, so heavy that he bent under it. He did all the works of the cloister like any other brother, watched and mortified his flesh so that he looked like a death's head, mere skin and bones." Here was a way to satisfy the stern Judge of heaven!

He saw each Sunday and many times in the week a picture over the altar in the Magdeburg church in which a boat filled with monks and nuns was sailing heavenward. Here was perhaps the only way to satisfy the stern Judge! Associating constantly with the monks, he had doubtless laid before him many times the earthly blessings and the heavenly rewards of a religious life.

After a year at Magdeburg, Martin was sent to Eisenach, which was his mother's birthplace. A relative of hers, Conrad Hutter, was the sexton of St. Nicolas Church, and she hoped for his help for her boy. Here again Martin was a "poor student" and begged his bread from house to house. Now, in response not only to his knock, but to his clear, high treble voice and the appeal of his dark eyes, whose deep gaze was noted by friend and enemy throughout his life,

an important door was opened to him, that of the Cotta family, who thenceforth took him in as one of themselves.

In the Cotta household he lived a new life. Loved and tenderly treated, no longer pinched by hunger, surrounded by refinement, he knew happiness which he had probably never imagined. When he spoke of Eisenach in later days, it was to call it "that dear city."

Now his mind grew as well as his body and soul. St. George's School which he attended was excellent and he learned rapidly. Here ruled a different spirit from any he had known. The teachers, among them the learned Trebonius, armed themselves, not with the rod, but with kindness and consideration. Trebonius always removed his scholar's cap when he entered his classroom, because of the embryo rulers, magistrates, and scholars whom he thought he saw before him. Here Martin heard for the first time of the ancient classics which were coming to light from forgotten libraries and were being circulated among the intellectuals; here he found food for his constantly increasing mental hunger.

In Eisenach, Martin's association with monks continued, both in the Cotta household and in the church to which his duties as chorister took

him daily. He saw in the church another picture, that of a devout young woman, St. Elizabeth, of whose traditional kindness to the poor and devotion to heavenly things all Eisenach spoke with awe. In his walks he must have looked many times toward the castle of Wartburg crowning a wooded hill where Elizabeth had lived. In her life was another answer to his longing question, "I am a great sinner — what must I do to be saved?"

In May, 1501, Martin left Eisenach for the University of Erfurt. The prosperity for which Hans Luther had toiled was in sight and with it his ambition for his boy grew more keen. Now Martin was no longer a "poor student," but paid his way and had, we may conjecture, money to spend. Gay and light-hearted, handsome, friendly, anxious to learn, he had upon entering the university as pleasant a prospect as any youth could wish.

Erfurt was at this time the intellectual center of Germany. Hither came students, not only from all sections of the Empire, but from outside its bounds. Here there was a fine library, here were famous teachers, here a keen and eager intellectual life. A proverb, current throughout Germany, expressed the fame of the university,

"He who would study rightly must go to Erfurt." It is likely that the lad sighed often over the shortness of the days.

Like many other cities of Germany, Erfurt was picturesque and beautiful. It lay on the bank of the river Gera and had within its walls noble examples of mediæval art, among them the cathedral and the great Church of St. Severinus. Tall towers, beautiful sculptures and bronzes, exquisite stained glass, and fine bells attracted the heart to the beauties of the religion which they set forth. The university was a low, monastic building, with a steep roof and a handsomely carved portal.

The city offered a gay social life to those who wished it. In this Martin took some part, though study was his chief occupation. His companions recalled in after years his merry disposition and his skill in song and in playing the lute.

In preparation for the law, he studied the general course offered by the university, logic, grammar and rhetoric, arithmetic, natural sciences, ethics and metaphysics. The accepted authority was Aristotle, whose teachings were held to be infallible. The investigation and experimentation which is the foundation of modern scientific training was unheard of. The

philosophers debated dull and profitless questions which had little relation to life. To them, however, Luther applied himself earnestly. Of his other studies he enjoyed most keenly astronomy, "whose subject-matter was the starry sky," and logic, which "teaches one to say a thing distinctly and plainly and in short, clear words."

The study of the new classics must have been tempting to the young Luther, but his strongest inclination was toward more serious subjects. Still the relation of man to God was the chief concern of his mind, and in the solution of this problem he expected the help of the philosophers. One day in the library at Erfurt he found a copy of the Bible and opening it read the story of Hannah and Samuel. But the book was connected in his mind with none of his difficulties, though he rejoiced to have found the volume from which the Scripture lessons of the missal and breviary were taken. Closing it, he thought of it no more.

Through his years at Erfurt, Luther could not have escaped hearing attacks upon the Church in which he hoped to be saved. The tendency of the humanists was away from the Church, many of whose practices they ridiculed. Followers

of Huss, still holding in secret their belief, came quietly into the town and stole quietly away. Though the city had within its walls over a hundred buildings owned by the Church and devoted to religious purposes, including eight monasteries, and though it was known as "Little Rome," it could not have been free from the scornful or bitter comments which were finding their way into print. The lives of individual monks, sung in coarse verse and pointed in vulgar epigram, must have been in the eyes of Luther a scandal and a shame. But he did not condemn the Church for the unworthy behavior of a few. He remained her devout son, believing all she taught. The very wickedness of those who were dedicated to God brought more and more clearly and constantly before him the awfulness of human sin and the dreadful fate of those who were not saved. A visitation of the plague in which friends and companions died about him, and a great storm to which he was exposed, quickened his consciousness of God's wrath.

In an unusually short time he received, first, his bachelor's, then his master's, degree. His father was pathetically proud of him. He ceased to address him with the familiar "thou" of daily

speech and substituted for it the "you" of formality. He saw near at hand the goal of his ambition for his boy, his graduation in the law. He bought for him a copy of the costly *Corpus Juris*, or "Body of the Law," and Martin returned to Erfurt to begin his final studies.

But in these studies he did not long continue. He found them dull, dry, utterly unprofitable. His contempt for the profession he expressed many times in later life. "Jurists commonly dispute and discuss about words. They alter the facts and fail to go to the bottom of them that the truth may be discovered." It was not strange that the profession proved distasteful to one whose chief delight it was to go to the bottom of things that truth might be discovered! But Luther had a more serious charge to make against the lawyers: "They take the money of the poor, and with their tongue thresh out their pocket and their purse."

Distaste for the work which was chosen for him for life proved to be the last straw on a load already heavy. Against his father's will, cruelly disappointing his father's hopes, to the horror of his companions who had no good opinion of the monastery, he announced that he was about to become a monk. Summoning his friends to

feast and sing with him once more, he bade them farewell, and went the next morning to the monastery of the Augustinians to kneel at the feet of the prior and to beg for God's mercy upon his sinful soul.

CHAPTER II

MONK, TEACHER, AND PREACHER

The friends whom Luther invited to his farewell supper were aghast at his announcement of the step he was about to take. In the short hours left them they tried every argument to dissuade him. It was wicked for one so young and with so promising a future to bury himself in a monastery. It is probable that Luther heard now, if he had never heard before, the scornful appellations which scoffers applied to the monks.

More difficult to bear than the protests of his friends was the anger of his father, who, whatever might be his opinion of the monks, had meant his boy for a different career and to that end had made so many sacrifices.

But stronger than paternal commands and the pleas and scoffing of his friends was the need of Martin's soul for peace. If the natural desires of a young man, who knew himself to possess a good mind and qualities of heart which made him sought after by many, caused him to cast any longing glances backward, his thoughts

were soon turned once more to the assurance of salvation which he expected ere long to feel. The world was behind him, shut out forever by the closing of the monastery door, but soon the blessed light of heaven would beam upon him.

The monastery of the Augustinians was the best of the cloisters in Erfurt, and in selecting it Martin acted with characteristic good sense. Its monks were the preachers of Erfurt; they bore a good reputation and were esteemed for their good works among the needy.

Luther rendered the most exact obedience to his superiors and to the rules of the order. His days and nights from dawn to dark and from dark to dawn were laid out for him; so many hours for labor, so many for prayer, so many — or so few! — for sleep. The chief object of the training of the year of novitiate was the cultivation of obedience and humility. A monk must learn, first of all, that he had ceased to have a will of his own. Among the tasks which were assigned to the newcomer were the sweeping and cleaning of the convent, and, most humiliating of all, that of begging. The young graduate of the university, who had been so much admired and from whom so much had been expected, went through the streets of Erfurt with a sack on his

shoulders, waiting humbly at doors which had hitherto opened to him as an honored guest. It is probable that he considered this task a small price to pay for the boon which he was seeking, and that he rejoiced in each pang which, conquered, brought him nearer to his goal. To his university which had been so proud of him the humiliation was intolerable, and its officials besought that he might be sent to beg elsewhere than in the city streets. To his superiors within the convent his learning was at once a source of pride and a reason for additional discipline. He must be taught that his achievements were as nothing.

At any time during the first year he might have left the monastery without a stain upon his honor. It is certain that there was no lack of persuasion to such a course. The friends who had so entreated him, the father who thought of him with angry grief, all did their best to call him back before it was too late. But all was without avail. No peace had as yet visited his heart, but to turn back would make certain the eternal loss of his soul. In the autumn of 1506, he became a member of the Augustinian Order, and promised to live until death in poverty, obedience, and chastity.

In the monasteries there were many varieties of men and many varieties of occupation. The Church used for her purposes all the various talents of her sons. There were monks who swept and scrubbed and dug gardens; there were those with musical talent who had in charge the elaborate and beautiful service; there were those whose gift for teaching was put to use in the monastery schools and in the universities; there were scholars who had for many years guarded and venerated learning which otherwise would have been lost; there were priests who admonished the people and administered the sacraments.

Having trained the novice in humility and patience and having admitted him to full fellowship with their order, Luther's superiors now resolved upon his ordination to the priesthood, which took place in February, 1507. On May 2 of the same year he celebrated his first mass.

To this solemn yet joyful ceremony he invited his father and various friends. His own joy in the occasion was profound. "God, glorious and holy in all his works, has deigned to exalt me, wretched and unworthy sinner, and to call me into his sublime ministry only for his mercy's sake. I ought to be thankful for the glory of such

divine goodness (as much as dust may be) and fulfill the duty laid upon me. Wherefore the fathers have set aside Sunday, May 2nd, for my first mass, God willing. That day I shall officiate before God for the first time. . . ."

Half mollified, his father brought him a gift. But he was not wholly reconciled. At the banquet which followed the mass, Martin described a vision which had finally led him to the monastery. "God grant," cried Hans, "that it was not some lying and devilish specter!" It was long before the father could entirely forgive or forget that which he considered to be an offense against filial duty.

Luther was now bound and sealed to the monastery. He occupied a small cell, seven feet by nine, from which a deeply embrasured window opened on the monastery graveyard. The furniture consisted of a pallet bed, a chair, and a table. Here in quiet and seclusion, relieved of the hard manual labor of his novitiate, he continued the study of philosophy in which he had distinguished himself, and began the study of the theology which taught that God, having promised for Christ's sake to forgive sin, has made it possible for man by good works to merit salvation. His textbook was not the Bible, but

the works of theologians and philosophers who had commented upon it.

Now he began once more to look into his own soul. He had taken the great step, he had suffered the required discipline, he had offered himself fully to God, and he might justly expect that the blessed change had been wrought and that he should find peace.

Instead, alas, he seemed to see only more abysmal depths of misery and wickedness. His heart was more troubled than before; more ominous than ever the fearful question fronted his frightened eyes, "What must I do to be saved?" Of his mental anxiety during this period he spoke in later years, saying that the pains of hell could be no greater.

With the most earnest zeal, he tried to apply to his own misery the answer given by the scholastic philosophy and theology which he was studying. A man could win God's grace by his works. He willed now to save himself by harsher penance and more ardent prayer. He secured a scourge and beat his poor body — already fearfully emaciated by fasting — until he fainted. He went without food for days and without sleep for many nights, and he exposed his body to the cold, lying at night on the stone floor

of his cell without covering. There his fellow monks found him senseless and almost lifeless and talked with uncomprehending admiration of his wonderful piety, until not only the cloister but the community regarded him with awe.

But all his self-torture was vain; still his despair grew. Living in the unhealthy atmosphere of the monastery apart from the wholesome distractions of the world, men invariably magnify the importance of those faults which they commit and imagine a hundred errors or, as Luther called them, "doll sins," of which they are not guilty. Luther's fear of God changed to hatred. Man could not avert the punishment which God had threatened nor could he love so arbitrary and unmerciful a Creator.

Gradually, however, he found relief. He began to read the Bible in obedience to the neglected rule of the Augustinians, and slowly there dawned upon his heart the first beams of coming day. Still at times clouds darkened the light, but the fearful tortures of the past oppressed him at longer and longer intervals. At his diligence in reading the Scriptures and at his finding comfort therein, his fellow monks were astonished.

Older monks by their counsels aided him in

his struggle. To them, Luther with his fearful depression seemed at times almost mad. An old confessor insisted to him that God was not angry with him, but that he was angry with God and that it was his duty to believe that God would forgive him.

From no other human agency did he receive as valuable help as from John Staupitz, a nobleman, the Vicar of the German provinces of the Augustinian Order, who loved him and who reminded him constantly of the love of God for him. Staupitz was dean of the theological faculty of the University of Wittenberg, recently established by Elector Frederick of Saxony, in which it was intended that the teachers should be Augustinian monks. When Staupitz recommended Luther to the position of instructor in philosophy, he accomplished two objects, he withdrew the young priest from the unwholesome contemplation of his imagined sins, and he provided for the new university a gifted and enthusiastic teacher. Thither in 1508 went Luther.

Wittenberg was a town of about three thousand inhabitants, situated in the flat, sandy country along the river Elbe. It was very different from handsome Erfurt. Among the few

fine buildings were the castle of the Elector of Saxony and the castle church set close together at one end of the town. In the center rose the tall towers of the great city church and at the other end stood the Augustinian monastery, or Black Cloister, so called from the black garb of the monks, and near it the single building of the university. The castle church was the repository for the five thousand relics of the saints gathered together by the pious Elector. Without doubt Luther looked with credulous reverence upon these objects.

The Elector Frederick, though he gave superstitious veneration to the Church, was an educated and intelligent man. Most important of all, he was foremost among the German rulers in resisting the absurd claims of the Pope.

Luther continued his work at Wittenberg until the autumn of 1509. During this time he took his first theological degree, *baccalaureus ad biblia*, and gradually also a more important work was wrought upon him. He continued a diligent study of the Bible, and one day as he was reading in the tower of the Augustinian convent where he lived, he came upon a short sentence in the Epistle to the Romans, "*The just shall live by faith.*" Now for Brother Martin

was the world made over. In deep and constant meditation, he came finally to see that the Bible teaching was different from the theology which he had been taught. *It was not by man's work, but by his faith, that he was saved.* An extraordinary peace came to abide in his soul. It seemed to him that now at last he was a Christian, a good Catholic. Here was the foundation stone of religion.

In the autumn of 1509 Luther returned to Erfurt, where he remained for almost two years preparing by study and by the delivery of certain prescribed lectures to begin the teaching of theology. During this period he was unexpectedly given an opportunity for which every devout mediæval yearned.

There had arisen among the Augustinians a difference of opinion about the policy of the order, and a messenger was sent to Rome to lay the matter in dispute before the proper authorities. Luther was appointed to accompany the monk to whom the matter was entrusted. The journey was made on foot in pleasant October weather, the two monks walking sedately one behind the other and praying as they walked. They counted no weariness too great which brought them each evening a little nearer to that

city which their hearts held in affectionate veneration. Here the blood of martyrs had been shed, here thousands of sacred relics lay yet hidden in the earth, here dwelt the Vicar of Christ.

The journey consumed about two months. The travelers rested for the night at the convents of the Augustinian Order along the way, and each day their eyes opened more and more widely at the fruitfulness of the land and at the comfort and elegance in which the inhabitants lived. In Florence they visited the hospitals. It is probable that the eyes of the tender-hearted Luther, which passed by without remark many other objects of art, gazed with pleasure upon the sculptured Della Robbia babies on the walls of the Spedale degli Innocenti. Upon the care and neatness within the hospital he commented with astonishment.

At sight of Rome he prostrated himself upon the ground, crying, "Hail, Holy Rome! Thrice holy art thou in whom the blood of the martyrs has been poured out!" Since he was merely the traveling companion of the monk who had the business of the Augustinians in hand, he was free to set out at once to visit the city. The architectural remains of antiquity interested him

and he spoke of them frequently in later years, particularly of mighty ruins like the Coliseum and the Baths of Diocletian.

Most diligently he visited the numerous shrines, which were supposed to have virtue for the healing of sickness and the remitting of sins. What an opportunity for the pious German monk who in his own words "believed all that he heard!" He said mass ten times, amazing his Italian acquaintances by his solemnity and deliberation, and he wished that his father and mother were already dead so that their stay in purgatory might be shortened by the doubly efficacious prayers which he could make in Rome.

The account of his halt midway in the ascent of the Santa Scala with the words, "The just shall live by faith," is of somewhat doubtful authenticity, since it rests upon the word of his son who, hearing his father tell the story in his childhood, wrote it down many years later. Luther's own account of the credulous piety with which he regarded every stone of Rome makes unlikely any resistance to custom. Though he was disgusted and horrified by the levity and impurity of many of the Roman priests, his faith in the Church was unshaken.

Soon after his return to Erfurt, Luther was again summoned to the University of Wittenberg, this time to become professor of theology. His friend Staupitz was anxious to retire from his position as dean of the theological faculty, and in response to his urging, Luther took in 1512 the highest degree in theology, that of doctor of divinity, so that he might succeed him. Settled once more in the Black Cloister, he applied himself with all his strength of mind and heart to his teaching.

At last he was to do the work which he loved and for which he had longed; he was to lecture on the Bible. As earnestly as he had searched his own soul for its imperfections in the days of his despair, so now he searched the Bible in order that he might discover every element of saving truth which it contained. He continued his study of Hebrew so that he might read at first hand the Old Testament, and began the study of Greek so that he might similarly learn the New Testament. His published lectures of this period, with their many allusions and quotations, show how wide was his reading. He studied with deep joy the writings of German mystics who insisted that a period of despair and anguish must precede the rebirth of the soul. This had been his

case exactly; surely now he was truly saved! A few years after he had begun to lecture there appeared a new Greek edition of the New Testament with a Latin translation by Erasmus, the humanist of Rotterdam, learned, witty, and a most ardent advocate of freedom of thought. The effect of a study of Erasmus was at once visible in the exposition of the young lecturer.

We have proof of the closeness and thoroughness of his application in the books which he used. Worn, thumbed, every tiniest spot covered with annotations, they enable the scholar to trace step by step his growing apprehension of Biblical teaching. That this teaching was different from that of the Church, or that it should some day sever him from her, could not have occurred to him as the most remote of possibilities.

He lectured during the first five years of his professorship upon the Psalms, the Epistle to the Romans, the Book of Judges, and the Epistle to the Galatians. Possessing great merit as commentaries upon the text of Scripture, these lectures were further marked by two qualities which were new to the theological classroom. In the first place, they were intensely practical. Luther drew his illustrations partly from his own heart, only recently torn with doubt and anguish

and now entirely at peace, partly from the life about him, and partly from contemporary history. His meaning could not be mistaken when it was so amply explained by events with which every one was acquainted or by the homely incidents of everyday life. His ability in this direction was like that of Lincoln, but his illustrations were drawn from much wider and deeper sources.

In the second place, his lectures proclaimed a new doctrine, the Pauline justification by faith. He declined no opportunity to attack the schoolmen and their cardinal principle of salvation by works. In the words of a contemporary: "After a long and dark night the light of a new doctrine seemed to dawn. He showed the distinction between the Law and the Gospel, and refuted the then prevalent error that, by their own works, men merit the forgiveness of sins, and by their observance of discipline, are righteous before God, and, like the Baptist, pointing to the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world, he declared that sins are remitted freely, on account of the Son of God, and that this benefit is to be received by faith. Other portions of the Church's doctrine were made clear. These beginnings of still better things gave him great

influence, especially since his life corresponded with his speech, and his words seemed to spring, not from his lips, but from his heart."

Not only the scholastic theology, but the scholastic philosophy, was the object of sharp attack, so that presently, in Luther's words, "Aristotle tottered to a fall" in Wittenberg. He attacked the schoolmen, not only for their errors, but for their dullness — a charge which must forever appeal to youth.

The personal attractiveness of the young teacher had probably not a little to do with the enthusiasm of the students. It was natural that they should flock to hear one so young and eager and interesting. Luther's youth, his fervor, his learning, his mellow voice, his deep, kind eyes, now melting into tenderness as he spoke of the love of God, now brightening into fire as he alluded to those who would deny or ignore the power of His grace, all combined to win for him the affection and admiration of his students and his companions. His friend George Spalatin said of him, "I think so much of him as a most learned and upright man, and, what is extremely rare, one of such acumen in judging that I wish to be entirely his friend." To him Christopher Schuerl, a well-known scholar, wrote: "Honored

Sir, and reverend Father, the Augustinian profession, your splendid virtue and great fame have so made me your subject that I greatly desire to be your friend, and to be inscribed in the catalogue of your intimates. With our common parent and vicar I conversed as much as the business of each of us permitted, and during several days and a part of the night the subject of our talk was frequently your excellence, goodness and learning."

Presently Luther began to preach as well as to teach. At first he was timid, even terrified, but as he realized his own strength, he grew confident. His sermons had the same merits as his lectures; they were simple, direct, and practical. Many pious Germans found that he expressed that which they had long felt, but which they had neither the courage nor the skill to say. He condemned superstition and faith in the efficacy of fasts and pilgrimages, and he had even something to say about the wickedness of an evil Pope. When he was invited to preach at a conference of the Augustinian Order, he selected as his theme not some scholastic question as had been the custom, but the evils of backbiting and slander in the monasteries. He reproved the students at Wittenberg for their unseemly

behavior, thereby winning the devout thanks of the townspeople. He ventured even to remonstrate with the Elector for his faults.

In May, 1515, Luther was made district vicar of his order and thereby his duties were greatly increased. To his friend John Lang he wrote a description of his days: "I am convent preacher, the reader at meals, am asked to deliver a sermon daily in the parish church, am district vicar (that is eleven times prior), business manager of our fish farm at Litzkau, attorney in our case *versus* the Herzbergers now pending at Torgau, lecturer on Saint Paul, assistant lecturer on the Psalter, beside having my correspondence, which, as I said, occupies most of my time. I seldom have leisure to discharge the canonical services, to say nothing of attending to my own temptations with the world, the flesh, and the devil."

But while the young monk labored for his Church, worn by her orisons and emaciated by her fasts, he had left, unknown to himself, the broad course established by her doctrine and practice. Whether the stream which he had entered should prove to be a true passageway to the great ocean of truth or merely a perilous bay where shoals should soon wreck his frail boat, time would tell.

CHAPTER III

THE NINETY-FIVE THESES AND THEIR EFFECT

Among the errors of faith and practice to which the young Luther called the attention of his parish was that of the vending of those pardons or indulgences by which the sinner expected to secure in exchange for money a remission of his sins, not only on the earth, but in purgatory. So enormous a sum had this traffic brought into the treasury of Rome that its extension was authorized in all portions of the Church. In its support the theory was set forth that Christ and the saints by their excess of merit had established a great treasury upon which the Pope could draw for the benefit of mankind. Even to those who were already dead and in purgatory could this merit be applied. Hard-hearted, indeed, must he be who would not give the small sum which would free from pain the soul of a beloved relative or friend! Foolish, indeed, was he who suffered contrition for sin when he might with so much less suffering be freed from guilt by the paying of a gulden!

Among the prelates of the Church there must have been many who disapproved of the traffic and who were not blind to the wicked misrepresentation of the vendors of indulgences, but the Church herself, far from correcting the abuse or setting straight the minds of the buyers, encouraged its growth in every possible way.

In 1514, Pope Leo X bestowed upon Prince Albert of Brandenburg three great bishoprics. According to canonical law Albert was not yet old enough to be a bishop. The uniting of three bishoprics under one head was also contrary to canon law. In return for these special privileges the Pope required of the young man a sum which would to-day have the value of about a million dollars. In order that Albert, who was now Archbishop of Magdeburg, administrator of the bishopric of Halberstadt, Archbishop and Elector of Mayence and Primate of Germany, might win back the enormous sum which he had paid for his honors, the Pope declared that indulgences would be sold for the benefit of the new St. Peter's Church in Rome, then in process of construction. A large share of the money from this sale was to belong to Albert to be transferred by him to the banking house which had loaned him the money with which to pay

the Pope. Thus the poor people were to pay unknowingly for the unlawful ambitions of a prince.

The chief agent in Albert's territory was a monk of the Dominican Order, Tetzel by name, a powerful preacher who terrified his hearers with vivid accounts of the pains of purgatory and the guilt and cruelty of withholding the small sum which would relieve one's friend or save one's self from torture.

Into the territory of Saxony Tetzel was not allowed to enter, since the electors declined to permit their subjects to help to pay the debt of Albert, with whose arrangements they were acquainted. But Tetzel pressed as near to the border as he dared, and to him went members of Luther's parish.

Thereupon Luther prepared to combat what he considered to be an offense against common sense and religion. After preaching against the indulgence traffic, he offered for debate a set of theses or statements. This was a well-known method of opening a discussion; Luther had himself only recently offered ninety-seven theses against the foolishness of scholastic philosophy. Now, on October 31, 1517, the Feast of all Saints, he fastened to the wooden door of the

castle church a new set of ninety-five theses against indulgences. The theses, written in Latin, were intended for his colleagues and not for the throngs of pious laymen who gathered upon that day to gain merit by viewing the five thousand relics collected by the Elector.

The theses were simple and practical. In the first was expressed the central truth of Luther's still unformulated interpretation of Christ's teaching, that is that Christ required repentance and sorrow for sin and not penances.

"1. Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ in saying *Penitentiam agite* (do penance) meant that the whole life of the faithful should be repentance."

The other theses explained and corrected various popular misconceptions.

"5. The Pope does not wish, nor is he able, to remit any penalty except what he or the Canon Law has imposed."

"22. The greater part of the people will be deceived by this undistinguishing and pretentious promise of pardon which cannot be fulfilled."

"28. It is certain that avarice is fostered by the money chinking in the chest, but to answer the prayers of the Church is in the power of God alone."

"36. Every true Christian, alive or dead, participates in all the goods of Christ and the Church without letters of pardon."

"43. Christians are to be taught that he who gives to the poor or lends to one in need does better than he who buys indulgences."

"50. Christians are to be taught that if the Pope knew the exactions of the preachers of indulgences, he would rather have St. Peter's church in ashes than have it built with the flesh and bones of his sheep."

"62. The true treasure of the Church is the holy gospel of the glory and grace of God."

It is plainly to be seen that Luther wrote as a true and devoted son of the Church, protesting for the Pope as well as for himself against the sale of indulgences as it was carried on. If the Pope knew the evil works of his agents he would certainly condemn them.

The same day as that on which Luther nailed the theses to the church door he wrote to Albert, ignorant of Albert's interest in the sale: —

"Papal indulgences for the building of St. Peter's are hawked about under your illustrious sanction. I do not now accuse the sermons of the preachers who advertise them, for I have not seen the same, but I regret that the people

have conceived about them the most erroneous ideas. Forsooth, these unhappy souls believe that if they buy letters of pardon they are sure of their salvation; likewise that souls fly out of purgatory as soon as money is cast into the chest; in short, that the grace conferred is so great that there is no sin whatever which cannot be absolved thereby. . . . They also believe that indulgences free them from all penalty and guilt.

"My God! Thus are the souls committed, Father, to your charge, instructed unto death, for which you have a fearful and growing reckoning to pay. . . .

"What else could I do, excellent Bishop and illustrious Prince, except pray your Reverence for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ to take away your instructions to the Commissioners altogether and impose some other form of preaching on the proclaimers of pardons, lest perchance some one should at length arise and confute them and their instructions publicly, to the great blame of your Highness. This I vehemently deprecate, yet I fear it may happen unless the grievance is quickly redressed."

In the mind of the Archbishop no regret was aroused, but instead violent anger, which in-

creased as he saw the sale of his indulgences begin to lessen. He wrote at once to Rome and sent with his complaint a copy of Luther's theses against indulgences and a copy of the theses against scholastic philosophy.

To Luther's amazement his hastily written statements attained at once an enormous popularity. Once more he had put into clear language the thoughts of thousands. The humanists welcomed the theses as a blow against the domination of the Church. One of them, the painter, Albert Dürer, sent Luther one of his wood-cuts to show his admiration and approval. The minor princes welcomed them because they were jealous of the power of the Church. Most popular of all were they among the "common men" whose scant and hard-earned money was so often taken from them. Without Luther's knowledge the theses were printed at Nuremberg in Latin and German, and in a few weeks were not only circulated through the whole of Germany, but passed far beyond the borders.

By the Pope the theses were received neither with approval nor with alarm. It would be a simple matter to silence this clever but foolish monk who would surely not risk all his future upon a quarrel with his superiors. Many little

fires had been lighted, but they had always been quenched. Sometimes those who lighted them had been themselves burned in the flames they kindled. The hard mouth of worldly Leo must have twitched with amusement as he read Luther's statement of the papal attitude toward indulgences. He ordered the General of the Augustinians, Gabriel della Volta, to command Luther to recant, and Volta in turn passed the command on to Dr. Staupitz, Luther's immediate superior and his beloved friend.

In April and May, 1518, there was held at Heidelberg a conference of the Augustinians of the province of Saxony, at which Luther appeared. Resigning his office of district vicar in order to save embarrassment to his order, he not only declined to withdraw any of his statements, but defended them in a sermon based upon the principles which underlay the theses. His fellow monks listened to him with courtesy, but not without astonishment. To his exposition of his doctrines no one seemed able to oppose any valid arguments.

Hearing that Volta had failed to secure a recantation, and being constantly urged by the Dominican Order to which the indulgence-vendor Tetzel belonged, the Pope ordered

action to be taken against Luther for "suspicion of heresy." Luther was commanded to appear in Rome within sixty days. With the order there was delivered to him a statement of the rights of the Church, which declared that whoever questioned an act of the Church was a heretic.

Upon his return from Heidelberg, Luther began the preparation of a careful defense and amplification of his theses. Dedicating this composition, which he called "Resolutions," to the Pope, he made humble submission, but defended and indeed extended all the statements which he had made.

When his friends warned him of the danger of his course, he answered: "He who is poor fears nothing and can lose nothing. Property I neither have nor desire. If I have had fame and honour, he who now loses them loses them forever. If, then, by force or plots, as God wills, they take away the one thing that is left, my poor, frail body, already worn out with incessant troubles, they will make me poorer for perhaps one or two hours of this life! Enough for me is it to have my precious Redeemer and Advocate, my Lord Jesus Christ, to whom I will sing as long as I have being. If any one be unwilling to sing with

me, what is that to me? Let him howl to himself if he so prefer!"

Before Luther could decide whether to obey or to refuse, the attitude of Rome grew suddenly more threatening. Cardinal Cajetan, the agent of the Pope in Germany, saw plainly that the fire lit by the presumptuous monk was not a small blaze to be easily extinguished, but that it had already spread far and wide over Germany. To his alarm was added rage when he heard that Luther had published a sermon on the ban in which he compared that hitherto useful weapon of Rome to a bat, which flew about in an annoying fashion, but did no harm. Immediately Luther ceased to be a suspected heretic and became a notorious heretic. As such he was summoned at once to meet the Cardinal at Augsburg. If he did not recant, he was to be sent thence bound to Rome. If it was impossible to secure him, he and his followers were to be put promptly under that ban of which he thought so lightly.

Now, if not before, must Luther have realized that his boat was turned out of the main current of the stream. Solemn thoughts must have come to his mind of the fate of those who had dared to call in question not even doctrines of the

Church, but merely her practices. But he did not falter. Again and again in his spoken and written word we have testimony to the light esteem in which he held his own life in comparison with truth. "Let Christ live," said he; "let Martin die." Sure of his position and of himself he set out for Augsburg. He was assured of a safe-conduct from the Emperor Maximilian, without which his own Elector Frederick would not let him proceed, and he was accompanied by friends, among them Dr. Staupitz. But that neither a safe-conduct nor the support of friends had saved Huss from the stake, he could not have forgotten.

On October 12, Luther had the first of three interviews with the Cardinal. At first complimenting and flattering, then storming and commanding, and always refusing to listen to Luther, Cajetan made clear that Rome would hear to nothing but a complete recantation. When Luther asked what errors he was expected to recant, Cajetan replied that there were two: first, Luther had asserted in support of his theses the sole authority of the Scriptures in matters of faith; and, second, he had taught in his Resolutions that the sacraments are of value only to those who believe the promise at-

tached to them. The demands of the Cardinal were reinforced by shouts. "At last," confessed Luther, "I began to shout also." The unreasonableness of the legate fortified Luther in his intention to do nothing against his conscience. Finally, seeing that nothing was being accomplished, he left Augsburg secretly and returned to Wittenberg. When Cajetan demanded that the Elector Frederick send him to Rome, Frederick refused to comply.

Before leaving Augsburg, Luther prepared an "Appeal from the Pope-badly-informed to the Pope-better-informed," in which he asked that his case be heard from the beginning before unprejudiced judges. The Pope's reply was not directed to Luther by name, nor did it make any allusion to his appeal. It took shape in a "bull" or decree, in which Luther's theories were condemned, and the issue at stake was made clear. If Luther persisted in the doctrines of his theses he opposed the Pope and the Church, to which he had hitherto declared himself loyal.

Upon the failure of Cajetan to arrest the heretic, the Pope sent a new ambassador to Germany, Charles von Miltitz. For his purpose Miltitz was armed, not only with a ban against Luther and an interdict against all Saxony, but

with the "anointed golden rose," a gift which carried with it great honor by which he was to win to his side the Elector Frederick, who had long coveted it. Miltitz was very different in temper from Volta, Cajetan, and the others who had hitherto been appointed to deal with the troublesome Luther. Hoping to adjust all things amicably, he arranged what seemed to him to be a compromise and wrote in glowing terms to the Pope of his success. That Luther yielded nothing is clear from his letter to the Elector: —

"Let me humbly inform your Grace that Charles von Miltitz and I have at last come to an agreement, and concluded our negotiations with two articles.

"1. Both sides shall be inhibited from preaching, writing, and acting further in the matter.

"2. Miltitz will write to the Pope at once, informing him how things stand, and asking him to recommend the matter to some learned bishop, who will hear me and point out the errors I am to recant. For when I have learned my mistakes, I will gladly withdraw them, and do nothing to impair the honor and power of the Roman Church."

Before the Pope could consider the failure of

his legate to accomplish his errand, the Emperor Maximilian died, and to the election of his successor the attention of Rome was devoted for many months. On account of the political situation it was inexpedient to anger the Elector Frederick, who had wide influence and who himself hoped for the imperial crown. The difficult conscience of the German monk was for fourteen months forgotten.

During the summer months of 1518 there had come to the University of Wittenberg a new teacher, Philip Melanchthon, a grand-nephew of the humanist Reuchlin. He had taken the degree of Master of Arts at seventeen and was still under twenty-one. Only a few days after he arrived, Luther wrote of him to his friend Spalatin the first tribute of an affection which lasted throughout life: —

"Doubt not that we have done all and shall do all you recommend about Philip Melanchthon. He delivered an oration the fourth day after he came, in the purest and most learned style, by which he won the thanks and admiration of all, so that you need not worry about commending him to us. We quickly abandoned the opinion we formed from his small stature and homeliness, and now rejoice and wonder at

his real worth, and thank our most illustrious Elector and your good offices, too, for giving him to us. . . . While Philip is alive, I desire no other Greek teacher."

The two men were exactly opposite in temperament. Melanchthon was a scholar, Luther a warrior. The difference in temper, however, made the one a complement rather than an antagonist of the other. More and more the young classicist turned his attention to the theological formulation of Luther's doctrines. There between them harmony of thought was complete. Though each was aware of the imperfections of the other, each held the gifts and achievement of his friend to be greater than his own. Luther was never weary of expressing his satisfaction in the society of his young colleague and his high opinion of his character and work.

"I am rough, boisterous, stormy, and altogether warlike. I am born to fight against innumerable monsters and devils. I must remove stumps and stones, cut away thistles and thorns and clear the wild forests; but Master Philip comes along softly and gently, sowing and watering with joy, according to the gifts which God has abundantly bestowed upon him."

The compact between Luther and Von Mil-

titz, that both parties to the argument should keep silence, was soon broken. John Eck of Ingolstadt, once a friend of Luther, had attacked his ninety-five theses in a pamphlet which he called "Obelisks," and had been answered by Luther in a pamphlet called "Asterisks." The quarrel was then taken up by a Wittenberg professor, Carlstadt by name, who prepared a set of theses on free will and the authority of the Scriptures, which Eck promptly answered. Now Luther took a hand once more by offering twelve propositions, in one of which he assailed the claim of the Roman Church to be superior to all other churches. Promptly Eck challenged both Carlstadt and Luther to a debate.

After a good deal of negotiation, Leipsic was selected for the scene of the debate. At once, in the midst of his lecturing, preaching, and writing, Luther set diligently to work to prepare himself by a thorough study of church history to meet his opponent. In the course of his investigation he came to a conclusion which amazed and disturbed him. The claim of Rome to supremacy was not made by any ancient right, for only within four hundred years had she attained her tyrannous power. In the decretals in which this power was defined, Scripture texts

which referred to "spiritual food and faith" were twisted to refer to temporal power. The words in which he announced his conclusion to his friend Spalatin, mark a new stage in his progress.

"I count the papal power as a thing indifferent," said he, "like wealth or health or other temporal goods, which are insisted on as if by the command of God, though He always teaches that they should be despised. How can I hear with equanimity this perverse interpretation of God's word and that wrong opinion, even if I allow the power of the Roman Church as a thing convenient?"

Luther made, moreover, another astonishing discovery. He learned that the teachings of John Huss, which had been condemned by the Council of Constance, were in entire accord with the gospel and the fathers.

The debate was held in the hall of the castle of Pleissenburg before a large audience. Eck, as the loyal and ardent supporter of the Church, was treated with the highest honor; Luther and Carlstadt and their friends, as the impudent questioners of her power, with rudeness. During the first week Carlstadt and Eck debated on free will; during the second week Luther and Eck on the primacy of the Pope and the

authority of a council. During the third week Luther and Eck discussed the orthodox doctrines of penance, purgatory, indulgences, and the power of the priest to absolve.

Eye-witnesses have described the handsome hall which was elaborately decorated for the occasion, the distinguished audience and the eager disputants — Eck, heavy in figure and countenance; Carlstadt, small, swarthy, and fiery; Luther, of medium height, emaciated, clear-voiced, and eloquent. Luther carried with him on one occasion a bouquet of flowers with whose odor he refreshed himself so often that an onlooker suggested that he held thereby communion with the devil.

The effect of the Leipsic debate was not limited to Luther himself. It was now necessary for his friends to take their choice between his friendship and doctrines and the protection and doctrines of the Church. Among those for whom his position was too advanced was his loved Staupitz, who became more and more alienated as the inevitable conclusion approached. The widening breach caused Luther great distress, but neither his own danger nor separation from his friends altered his convictions.

It was inevitable that Rome should ere long

take notice of the insolence of her son. The election of the new Emperor was held on June 28, 1519, at which time Charles of Spain, the grandson of Maximilian, was chosen. Now it was no longer necessary to conciliate the Elector Frederick, and at once he was commanded to give Luther up. Again he refused. After Eck had come to Rome with a first-hand account of the black heresy of his opponent, the bull against Luther was prepared and signed on June 15, 1520. It was called "Exsurge Domine," from the first words of the opening sentence, "Arise, Lord, plead thine own cause, arise and protect the vineyard thou gavest Peter from the wild beast who is devouring it." The wild beast was to have sixty days to recant; if he remained stubborn, he would be declared a "stiff-necked, notorious, damned heretic" and would be excommunicated.

CHAPTER IV

THE PRIMARY WORKS OF THE REFORMATION AND THE DIET OF WORMS

THE Pope's bull, which was signed in June, was not published in Germany until September, and its sixty days of grace did not expire until November 28. In the mean time Luther had taken counsel with himself, and with a clear and discerning eye had scrutinized more deeply and widely the doctrines and practices of the Church. As the fruit of his research and meditation he published in August, October, and November three works: "An Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation on the Improvement of the Christian Estate"; "An Address on the Babylonian Captivity of the Church"; and "An Address on the Freedom of a Christian Man."

These works have been called the "Primary Works" of the Reformation. Multiplied by the new printing-press, spread into the uttermost corner of Germany as well as far beyond its boundaries, they made at once a profound impression. Simple, plain, earnest, they revealed

the whole man, giving testimony to the deep spiritual experiences through which he had passed and eloquently expressing his passion for the welfare of Christ's Church.

The "Address to the Nobility of the German Nation" was written in German, the common language of those for whom it was intended. It demanded of the people that they should from patriotic motives set themselves to the reforming of the Church. With the most profound solemnity and earnestness Luther announced in the beginning, in the words of Ecclesiastes, that the time for silence was past, the time to speak at hand. After expressing his consciousness of his own weakness and his reliance upon God, he described three walls which the Roman Church had built about itself so that reform was impossible. First, when pressed by the temporal power, it maintained that the temporal power had no jurisdiction over it. Second, when charged with violating the Scriptures, it objected that no one might interpret the Scriptures but the Pope. Third, when threatened with a council, it asserted that no one might call a council but the Pope.

One by one Luther attacked these walls. In opposition to the first he made a statement so

radical that the nation might well gasp at hearing it. "All Christians," said he, "are truly of the Christian estate, and there is no difference among them, save of office alone. . . . Between laymen and priests, princes and bishops, or as they call it between spiritual and temporal persons, the only real difference is one of office and function, and not of estate. . . . Christ's body is not double or two-fold, one temporal, the other spiritual. He is one head and he has one body. . . . A cobbler, a smith, a peasant, every man has the office and function of his calling, and yet all alike are consecrated priests and bishops, and every man in his office must be useful and beneficial to the rest." To the officials of the Church who held themselves so high above the rest of mankind the words must have been almost blasphemous. To others who had long deplored in thought or word the unchristian arrogance of the Church, they seemed to have the authority of the Scriptures themselves.

Since, said Luther, the so-called temporal power was just as valuable as the spiritual power, and equal to it and not beneath it in rank, it must do its duty "throughout the whole Christian body: whether it strikes popes, bishops, priests, monks, or nuns."

The claim that the Pope only could interpret the Scriptures Luther denied without great elaboration, since he considered this wall tottering and weak. The Pope had often erred. It might even come to pass "that the Pope and his followers are not true Christians, and not being taught by God have no true understanding, whereas a common man may have true understanding." Moreover, "We are all priests, and have all one faith, one gospel, one sacrament; how then should we have not the power of discerning and judging what is right and wrong in matters of faith?"

As for the third wall, neither the Scriptures nor the early history of the Church gave the Pope alone the right to call a council. Christ commands: "Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between him and thee alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen and publican. . . ." The council of the apostles was not called by St. Peter, but by the apostles and all the elders.

Many councils have been called by Emperors. It was the duty of the temporal power to reform the Church, as it would be the duty of every citizen to give warning and aid if a fire should break out. "Would it not be most unnatural, if a fire were to break out in a city, and every one were to let it burn on and on, whatever might be burnt, simply because they had not the mayor's authority, or perhaps because the fire broke out at the mayor's house? How much more should this be done in the spiritual city of Christ, if a fire of offense break out, either at the Pope's government or wherever it may!"

Having demolished the three walls, Luther enumerated some of the evils which a council should consider. Among them were the life of the Pope who lived in worldly pomp such as no king or emperor could equal, and the greed of the cardinals to whom valuable livings were assigned while the people were ruined by taxation. With a decrease in the number of cardinals should come a cutting-off of the thousands of so-called papal servants who lived upon the revenues gathered from the poor. Surely it is the duty of the Christian princes of the German nation to protect their people from the "ravenous wolves in sheep's clothing!"

These matters were not, Luther emphatically declared, evils of which he alone knew and complained; they were notorious. "Even at Rome they are forced to own that it is more terrible and worse than one can say."

In conclusion Luther offered twenty-seven articles respecting the abolishing of these and other evils. The German princes, nobles, and cities should refuse to pay the tributes demanded by Rome, they should refuse to allow Rome to administer their ecclesiastical affairs. "If a courtling came from Rome, he should receive the strict command to withdraw, or to leap into the Rhine, or whatever river be nearest, and to administer a cold bath to the interdict, seal and letters and all." Thus those at Rome would learn that the Germans were not always what they called them in scorn, "drunken fools." No temporal matters might be decided at Rome and the "excessive, over-presumptuous, and most wicked claims of the Pope, which required the bishops to swear oaths of fealty, the Emperor to kiss the Pope's feet, or to pay any sort of homage, must be firmly denied." "The Pope," said Luther, "is not the Vicar of Christ in heaven, but only of Christ upon earth. For Christ in heaven, in the form of a ruler, requires no vicar,

but there sits, sees, does, knows, and commands all things. But He requires the Pope — in the form of a servant — to represent Him as He walked upon earth, working, preaching, suffering, and dying." In contrast with the lowliness of Christ, how dreadful the pomp of him who claims to be his Vicar and who compels men to kiss his feet!

Pilgrimages to Rome, which led to dissipation and the neglect of duties at home, should be abolished; so also should the mendicant monasteries wherein men "grievously labor and torment themselves by their own rules and laws, and yet never arrive at a true understanding of a spiritual and good life." Monasteries should be schools which men might leave when they chose. The parish priest who must live among his people should be allowed to marry in honor instead of living in dishonor as many did. The number of saints' days, which were inducements to idleness and wastefulness, should be diminished, fasts should be optional, and every kind of food should be made free.

It was now high time to take up the cause of the Bohemians of whom John Huss was burned. Whether or not Huss was wrong, his burning was a monstrous crime, and the Hussites should

not be compelled to give approval to it and should be allowed to unite once more with the Church. The universities should be reformed, and above all subjects in the universities and in lower schools, should the Scriptures be taught.

"The Address to the Nobility of the German Nation" is a powerful appeal to patriotism and as such is one of the treasures of the nation. But it is more than a merely local document; it is one of the immortal documents of human freedom.

Having breathed his first loud trumpet blast, Luther followed it speedily with a second. The "Address on the Babylonian Captivity of the Church" was written in Latin, since it was intended primarily for the clergy and other learned men. Its subject was the sacramental system of the Roman Church and its errors and evils. Regretting his past toleration, stating that his earlier writings might as well be burned since they did not deal radically enough with the evils of the Church, Luther announced now his real opinion.

The Roman Church claimed seven sacraments, — baptism, confirmation, the eucharist, penance, extreme unction, matrimony, and orders. Originally the word *sacramentum* meant merely a sacred or holy thing; ultimately the term was

applied to a rite of the Church to which a spiritual meaning adheres. For the administration of these sacraments, which were bound up with the most ordinary events of life, the priests alone had power, and upon their administration the salvation of man was supposed to depend. By withholding them the Church could bring the most stubborn of its sons to submission; by exacting pay for them she could draw from the poorest of the laity a heavy tribute.

Luther struck at the roots of the upas tree which had spread its benumbing shade over Christendom by attacking the whole sacramental system. The sacraments, he declared, were not supernatural rites upon which man's salvation depended; they were merely the outward sign of God's promise. Only when a man had faith in the promises of God were they of value to him, and if he had this real faith he did not need them.

There were, moreover, only three sacraments, — the eucharist, baptism, and penance. Since penance or repentance was merely return to baptism, there were in reality but two. Confirmation was merely a rite of the Church; matrimony, which had existed since the beginning of the world and existed now outside the Church, was in no sense a sacrament. Orders, or the

laying-on of hands at the ordination of a priest, was, like confirmation, merely a rite of the Church to which no divine promise was attached. For the anointing of the sick there was no divine authority. The Apostle James advised anointing so that the sick might recover, not to prepare them for death, as the Church now taught.

The third of the Primary Works, "On the Liberty of a Christian Man," was written both in Latin and German, so that it might be read by both the learned and the unlearned. In this little pamphlet Luther reached to the height and depth of spiritual things and to the height of noble and clear expression. It is one of the classics, not only of religious literature, but of all literature. Luther began by laying down two statements, "A Christian man is the most free lord of all and subject to none," and "A Christian man is the most dutiful servant to all and subject to every one." The soul can do without everything but the word of God — thus Luther explained his first thesis — having the word of God, it is rich and wants for nothing. A right faith in Christ is an incomparable treasure, carrying with it universal salvation. The repentant and believing soul, by the pledge of its faith in Christ, becomes free from all sin, fearless of

death, safe from hell, and endowed with the eternal righteousness of Christ. He becomes a king, exalted above all things, not in the sense of corporeal power as was the mad belief of certain ecclesiastics, but in a spiritual empire, a more lofty and eminent dignity.

But the Christian man, full of faith and assured of salvation, has still before him his earthly life, wherein he must do good works, not as penance in order to gain salvation, which is already his by reason of his faith in God, but first, so that his body may be purified and be made a fit vessel to hold the new man which he has become. The custom of injuring the body and the brain in mortification is enormous folly. A second sort of good work which the Christian man will do is that of charity and mercy; herein does he make himself a servant to all.

Prefacing the address was a letter to the Pope. Luther declared that he said nothing against the Pope; he denounced only the evil of the Pope's ministers, among whom he sat "like a lamb among wolves." "Leo," said Luther, "is worthy of a better age; let him be warned of those sirens who would make him out a god!"

Early in December Luther made solemn and spectacular answer to the bull of warning and

to the many other threats which were preparing against him. When the time given him to recant had expired, when his condemned books had been burned by a papal legate at Louvain and Liège, Luther also lit a fire. Outside the walls of Wittenberg, he burned a copy of the bull, together with a copy of the canon law which set forth the supremacy of the Roman See and the power of the Pope. The notice of his action was prepared by his friend Melanchthon. "Let whosoever adheres to the truth of the Gospel be present at nine o'clock at the Church of the Holy Cross outside the walls, where the impious books of papal decrees and scholastic theology will be burnt according to ancient and apostolic usage. . . . Come, pious and zealous youth, to this pious and religious spectacle, for perchance now is the time when the Antichrist must be revealed!" As the fire burned, Luther apostrophized the Pope: "Because thou hast brought down the truth of God, He also brings thee down unto the fire this day."

The excommunication threatened by the Pope's bull was somewhat delayed. The document conveying the "holy curse" was drawn up in January, but was of so violent a character

and included with Luther in its condemnation so many German patriots, among them the Elector himself, that its author was persuaded to revise it. While it was being modified, Luther was summoned to meet his Emperor at Worms. The "single flea," as he had called himself, was now to address the most powerful of earthly kings face to face, a possibility of which he had not dreamed.

The Diet of Worms was the first conference of the new Emperor with his German subjects. Various questions relating to the welfare of the kingdom were to be considered, among them the religious difficulty which had been the source of so much agitation. Toward this question and toward the originator of it the attitude of the Emperor was not yet known. Luther and his friends still hoped that his case might be heard before an impartial tribunal. Rome, on the other hand, considered that there was no reason for further discussion; Luther was a heretic already condemned by the Church and upon him should fall also the condemnation of the Emperor. The outcome depended, not upon the activities of the papal legates or upon the ability of Luther's friends to support him, but upon the decision of Charles.

Upon the head of Charles, who was but twenty-one years old, rested mighty crowns of actual sovereignty as well as lighter symbols of merely honorary rule. Already by inheritance ruler of Austria, Spain, Naples, and Burgundy, his election had made him also Emperor of Germany. Those who hoped for the success of Luther's cause or merely for the safety of his life might point to the German descent of Charles and to the necessity under which he was, on account of dangers within and without his wide realm, of treating with consideration his German subjects. Luther himself cherished high hopes of reform under the new Emperor, as did also all those who longed for the unity and independence of the German nation. Luther's enemies, on the other hand, remembered that in the first place the young Charles was a devout son of the Church, and that, in the second, he would have small sympathy with the theological or patriotic aims of the Germans, of whose language and spirit he was wholly ignorant.

For some weeks before he was actually summoned, Luther had been informed by his friends at the Diet that it was possible, indeed increasingly probable, that he would be required to appear, not to present his doctrines, but simply to

recant. When they asked him what he would do in such a case, he answered in true Lutheran fashion: "If I am summoned, I will go if I possibly can: I will go ill if I cannot go well. For it is not right to doubt if I am summoned by the Emperor, I am summoned by the Lord. He lives and reigns who saved the three Hebrew children in the furnace of the king of Babylon. If he does not wish to save me, my life is a little thing compared to that of Christ, who was slain in the most shameful way, to the scandal of all and the ruin of many. Here is no place to weigh ruin and safety; rather we should take care not to abandon the gospel, which we have begun to preach, to be mocked by the wicked, lest we give cause to our enemies of boasting that we dare not confess that we teach and shed our blood for it. . . . You may expect me to do anything but flee or recant: I will not flee, much less will I recant."

When the summons came, together with a promise of safe-conduct, Luther set out, traveling in a wagon drawn by two horses which had been furnished by the town of Wittenberg and with money from the university to cover his expenses. In the reception which was tendered him on his journey he might well have forgotten, for a while at least, the danger into which he

was about to venture. The common people blessed him as he went even though the Pope's ban was posted all along the way. In the words of the papal legate, "Nine tenths of the Germans shout, 'Long live Luther,' and the other tenth, 'Down with Rome.'" On April 16 he arrived at Worms, where the whole city crowded to greet him or to stare.

Worms was at this time an important and beautiful city. Above the steep-roofed houses towered the great Cathedral of St. Peter and St. Paul, a visible symbol of the ancient might of the Church. Near by newer edifices testified to its continued power and prosperity. Hither came often the Imperial Court, so that the city was called the "Mother of Diets," and here before the time of Luther many important questions had been decided.

Never, however, had the city been the scene of so momentous a conference as that which was now in session. The assembly was presided over by the young Emperor; its members were great princes of spiritual and temporal states and representatives of the powerful free cities of Germany. Beside them, there had come to Worms all those of many nations — Germans, Spaniards, Netherlanders, Italians — who had

business with the Imperial Court or who served it.

On the afternoon of April 17, 1521, Luther was called before the Diet. As he entered he saw for the first time his Emperor, panoplied with gold and surrounded by princes and cardinals. Crowding the hall, peering in through doors and windows, pressed a throng of men, some regarding Luther with curious horror, others with frightened admiration.

Luther was informed first of all that he must merely answer the questions put to him and say no more. Pointing to a pile of books on the table, an official asked whether they were his and whether he wished to recant any part of them. Luther made a wise answer: —

"First, the books are mine, I deny none of them. The second question, whether I will reassert all or recant what is said to have been written without warrant of Scripture, concerns faith and the salvation of souls and the Divine Word, than which nothing is greater in heaven or on earth, and which we all ought to reverence; therefore it would be rash and dangerous to say anything without due consideration, since I might say more than the thing demands or less than the truth, either of which would bring me

in danger of the sentence of Christ, '*Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in Heaven.*' Wherefore I humbly beg Your Imperial Majesty to grant me time for deliberation, that I may answer without injury to the Divine Word or peril to my soul."

Contrary to the desire of his opponents, he was granted until the next day to deliberate and to prepare his answer. It was not strange that he did not sleep that night. Occupied with grave thoughts, he kept vigil.

When he appeared at the Diet the next afternoon he was reproached with not having had a reply ready the day before and was commanded to delay no longer to give his answer. At once he responded, first in German and then in Latin. While he spoke night fell, and the flaring lamps cast dark shadows into the corners of the hall, deepened the cardinals' robes into crimson, dulled the yellow canopy of Charles's throne, and made the white face of the monk whiter. He acknowledged that the books were his, and divided them into three classes, each of which he described.

"In some I have treated piety, faith, and morals so simply and evangelically that my ad-

versaries themselves are forced to confess that these books are useful, innocent, and worthy to be read by Christians. Even the bull, though fierce and cruel, states that some things in my books are harmless, although it condemns them by a judgment simply monstrous. If, therefore, I should undertake to recant these, would it not happen that I alone of all men should damn the truth which all, friends and enemies alike, confess?

"The second class of my works inveighs against the Papacy as against that which both by precept and example has laid waste all Christendom, body and soul. No one can deny or dissemble this fact, since general complaints witness that the consciences of all believers are snared, harassed, and tormented by the laws of the Pope and the doctrines of men, and especially that the goods of this famous German nation are devoured in numerous and ignoble ways. . . . If, therefore, I should withdraw these books, I would add strength to tyranny and open windows and doors to their impiety, which would then flourish more freely than it ever dared before.

"In the third sort of books I have written against some private individuals who tried to

defend the Roman tyranny and tear down my pious doctrine. In these I confess I was more bitter than is becoming to a minister of religion. . . . Yet neither is it right for me to recant what I have said in these, for then tyranny and impiety would rage and reign against the people of God more violently than ever by reason of my acquiescence."

When he was angrily pressed for a more simple and direct answer, he gave the Diet what it sought: —

"Since Your Majesty and Your Lordships ask for a plain answer, I will give you one without either horns or teeth. Unless I am convicted by Scripture or by right reason (for I trust neither in Popes nor in councils, since they have often erred and contradicted themselves) — unless I am thus convinced, I am bound by the texts of the Bible, my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I neither can nor will recant anything, since it is neither right nor safe to act against conscience. God help me, Amen."

At last a voice was lifted against the un-Christ-like ways of Christ's Church, once more a higher standard was raised than the fallible judgment of fallible men, at last the liberty of Christian

men was declared. In the voice echoed the tones of Huss, of Wycliffe, of the martyred Albigenses.

At once Luther was dismissed. His joyful relief was expressed in the words, "I am through! I am through!" For several days he remained in Worms, where he was visited by many persons who tried to persuade him to a less radical position. But he would not be moved.

On April 26, he left the city. Preaching on the way he visited his loved Eisenach and Möhra, the home of his father's youth, where he met his kinsfolk. The expiration of the Emperor's safe-conduct was at hand, and in its stead a new paper was being prepared to deal with his case, a paper draughted by the Emperor himself. Luther's doctrines were declared to be the most intolerable of heresies, and not only he but his followers were to be put under the ban of the Empire.

Before the paper was signed, however, Luther was safe. His Elector and his friends determined that he should seek a temporary refuge in the castle of Wartburg, the towering edifice at which he had gazed often from the streets of Eisenach. Thither after a pretended capture, he was carried on May 4.

His disappearance caused the most intense excitement. By many it was believed that he had been murdered; by others the truth was suspected. The sentiment of the people was expressed by Albert Dürer, the painter: "I know not whether he yet lives or is murdered, but in any case he has suffered for the Christian truth. . . . If we lose this man who has written more clearly than any one who has lived for one hundred and forty years, may God grant his spirit to another. . . . O God, if Luther is dead, who will henceforth expound to us the gospel?"

CHAPTER V

AT THE WARTBURG AND BACK IN WITTENBERG

THE stronghold which was to be Luther's home for almost a year was already associated with the real and legendary history of Germany. Here had dwelt the saintly Elizabeth, of whose good deeds Luther had heard with awe as a lad, and here the Meistersingers of Wagner's opera had held their contests.

To Luther was assigned a room and several attendants. Friends who were in the secret of his hiding were allowed to visit him and he was permitted to walk and ride about and even to accompany the chase. Here as elsewhere his mind was occupied with the great problem of religion. A letter in which he recounts an experience of the hunt reveals his tenderness of heart and the obsession of his spirit with the salvation of mankind: —

"Last week I hunted two days to see what the bitter-sweet pleasure of heroes was like. We took two hares and a few poor partridges — a worthy occupation indeed for men with

nothing to do. I even moralized among the snares and dogs, and the superficial pleasure I may have derived from the hunt was equaled by the pity and pain which are a necessary part of it. It is an image of the devil hunting innocent little creatures with his guns and his hounds, the impious magistrates, bishops, and theologians. I deeply felt this parable of the simple and faithful soul. A still more cruel parable followed. With great pains I saved a little live rabbit, and rolled it up in the sleeve of my cloak, but when I left it and went a little way off, the dogs found the poor rabbit and killed it by biting its right leg and throat through the cloth. Thus do the Pope and Satan rage to kill souls and are not stopped by my labor. I am sick of this kind of hunting and prefer to chase bears, wolves, foxes, and that sort of wicked magistrate with spear and arrow. It consoles me to think that the mystery of salvation is near, when hares and innocent creatures will be captured rather by men than by bears, wolves, and hawks, i.e., the bishops and theologians."

In his imprisonment Luther was frequently depressed. The rigors of monastic training began to have their effect in ill health, which made his

life from now on often a burden. Various forms of indigestion resulting in vertigo, the nervous irritation and exhaustion which follows overwork, and finally calculus began to attack the strong peasant body, but did not quench the fiery spirit or seriously affect the busy hand and brain. One reason for anxiety was Luther's fear that his disappearance might seem cowardly.

He described his life in one of the many letters which he sent from the Wartburg as one of "indolent idleness." Yet never had his pen moved so rapidly. From it poured tracts, sermons, expository writings and scores of letters to hearten his friends. He did not allow himself to be separated from that world which he had left in turmoil. When the Archbishop of Mayence, emboldened by his absence, opened a new sale of indulgences, Luther wrote him so indignant and fiery a letter that the Archbishop submitted in fright.

More important than any other work accomplished in the Wartburg was the translation of the New Testament into German, which was finished in less than three months. This version was by no means the first translation of the Scriptures into German. Those which existed were, however, made from the Latin Vul-

gate and included its errors. Moreover, they were written in a poor Latinized German impossible for the average reader to understand. Luther used not the Vulgate, but the original Greek, for his source of material and the German of the common people for his vehicle of expression.

For the task of translation he was amply prepared. He was, in the first place, thoroughly acquainted with the Bible, as only those can be who have turned to it in hours of deep despair and have felt in their own hearts the spiritual experiences of its characters and the healing of its divine consolation. The study of Greek had become a passion with Luther at Erfurt and he had never ceased to apply himself to it, especially to the Erasmian edition of the New Testament. In the third place, his native German had become in his mouth a glowing and living tongue, such as it had never been. Acquainted with the speech of the fireside and the market-place, he sought with careful patience for those words which would make most clear to simple folk the meaning of the original. Added to his capacity for taking pains was the true literary gift which would have made him famous even if he had never exhibited a

reforming zeal. Thus prepared and working with superhuman swiftness, he produced a version which possesses amazing unity.

The humble spirit in which he labored may be seen in an allusion to his work: "I also have undertaken to translate the Bible. It is good for me, for otherwise I might have died with the fond opinion that I was learned."

That he was successful in his task, four centuries abundantly testify. The Luther translation has never been equaled or superseded. Beside giving to his dear Germans their Bible, Luther gave them from many rough dialects the noble tongue in which Goethe and Schiller were to write.

The New Testament was published in September, 1522. The volume was made as handsome as possible with fine woodcuts, and contained a description of the Holy Land by Melanchthon and many notes.

Outside the quiet Wartburg confusion reigned. The acceptance of Luther's doctrines of Christian liberty released mankind from a thousand binding rules. As in all times of change in human thought, many lost their moorings, and those who were not sufficiently clear-headed and strong-willed to adjust their lives to freer ways

and higher ideals went sadly adrift. There were radicals, especially in Wittenberg and Zwickau, who out-Luthered Luther and carried reform far beyond the limits of common sense and reason.

One of the first practical effects of the new teaching was the marriage of parish priests, a reform of which Luther heartily approved and which he had recommended. That the parish priest living among his people, ministered to of necessity by women, should be compelled to live in celibacy, Luther in his "Address to the Nobility of the German Nation" had declared to be wrong, especially since the condition had been productive of constant scandal to the Church.

The breaking of the monastic vow of chastity seemed at first to Luther to be different from the violation of the celibacy demanded of the parish priest. Presently, however, he came to the conclusion that all monastic vows were ungodly because they were contrary to nature and to faith.

The new spirit showed itself in the repeal of certain civil laws and the passing of new and sensible ordinances. The begging friars were forbidden to ply their business, the worthy poor were provided for, a part of the funds for this purpose being drawn from the funds of monas-

tic brotherhoods. Presently the services of the church were simplified.

Among those who brought discredit to the new movement was that Carlstadt who had debated with Luther against Eck, and also fanatical men from Zwickau, who preached a return to a primitive life with the abolition of all social distinctions, of education, and of all labor but manual labor. With such earnestness did they advocate their doctrines that not only the unlearned but men like Melanchthon were considerably impressed. Even the Elector had grave doubts as to the wisdom of resisting them, anarchists though they were.

Each proposed change brought protest from the more conservative of the population and each refusal of the conservative to accede brought fresh tumult from the radicals. So concerned was Luther that he made in December a hurried and secret visit to Wittenberg. In the progress of true liberty he rejoiced, but he deplored then and thereafter all violence. Changes must be made gradually, in an orderly way, and by the State. In the new liberty old evils would disappear of themselves. "Pay no more money for bulls, candles, bells, pictures, churches," said he; "but declare that the Chris-

tian life consists in faith and love, and keep doing it for two years, and you will see what happens to Pope, bishop, cardinal, priest, monk, nun, bells, steeples, masses, vigils, cowl, cap, shaven poll, rules, statutes, and the whole swarm and rabble of the Pope's government. They will vanish like smoke." For the excesses of the fanatics, with their faith in dreams, their advocacy of the destruction of property, their insistence upon re-baptizing all their converts by immersion, he had only condemnation.

After Luther's visit to Wittenberg the tumult did not diminish, but rather increased. So great was the confusion that he now appeared openly, taking upon himself all the responsibility for his return. At once he assumed his old duties as teacher and preacher.

With him he brought order. Calm, controlled, he showed that the power of the new gospel was to build as well as to destroy. For eight successive days he preached in the city church, the general subject of his discourses being the Pauline text, "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient." Violence was of the devil; the Christian liberty of which they made so much was liberty to serve one's fellow men.

In his second sermon he declared a principle which he held firmly, contrary to the policy of the Roman Church and contrary to the policy of some other reformers.

"Compel or force any one with power I will not, for faith must be gentle and unforced. Take an example by me. I opposed indulgences and all the papists, but not with force; I only wrote, preached, and used God's Word, and nothing else. That Word has broken the Papacy more than any king or emperor ever broke it. Had I wished it, I might have brought Germany to civil war. Yes, at Worms I might have started a game which would not have been safe for the Emperor, but it would have been a fool's game So I did nothing, but only let the Word act."

With seemly deliberation and without turmoil began the upbuilding of the new Church. At first the old form of service was continued with a few modifications, but presently the Latin of the mass was given up for German so that all might understand, and later a simpler service was prepared which might or might not be used. In order to provide the people with a part in the service, Luther wrote forty-two hymns, of which the greatest is "A Mighty Fortress is our God."

Among the reforming measures upon which Luther laid particular emphasis was that of education. Everywhere parents were urged to send their children to school. For their proper training Luther prepared a curriculum which included music and instruction in religion. In 1524 he published a "Letter to the Aldermen and cities of Germany on the erection and maintenance of Christian schools." He argued that children should be taught, first, that they might read the Bible, and second, so that they might be trained to govern. Not only boys but girls should be educated and public libraries should be established in every town.

More trying than any other difficulty which Luther had to meet was a widespread and serious uprising of the peasants in 1525. From them had come requests for many years that their condition be ameliorated. The demand was wholly justifiable. To their plea the princes would not listen, but responded with cruel punishments. Gradually the temper of the peasants changed. They began to dream of revolution, to believe that it was their duty to destroy all rulers so that God's kingdom might come. Luther's stirring "Address to the Nobility of the German Nation," which proposed so many

reforms, seemed to reveal him as the prophet and leader of their cause.

It was a leadership which Luther did not desire and would not have. While he reproved the princes for their tyranny, he condemned the peasants for their threats. Upon becoming real Christians both would find their grievances to vanish. It was right and necessary that there should be rulers and to them men should give obedience.

But to Luther's admonishing the peasants would not hearken. Furiously denouncing him as a traitor to their cause, they began a fierce warfare. Burning and murdering, they rushed upon the unprepared princes, many of whom felt in their terror that there was nothing to do but yield.

Forced to choose between what he considered to be a lawful if imperfect government and the worst sort of anarchy, Luther advised vehemently that the uprising be quelled. Bitterly reproached at the time and since, he is believed to-day to have taken the only possible course for one who saw clearly that all he had accomplished was becoming allied in the minds of sensible men with riot and revolution. He spoke with the deepest pity for the poor, mis-

guided peasants, but said and believed that it was better to cut off a member than to allow the whole body to perish. The war ended with the defeat of the peasants.

The years following immediately upon Luther's return from the Wartburg saw the end of the old friendship with Staupitz, to whom Luther owed so much and whom he had dearly loved. Unable to follow his former disciple along the dangerous path which he had chosen, the old man died in alienation though not in anger.

A more serious disaster befell the friendship of Luther and the famous Erasmus. Admiring greatly the younger man's courage, Erasmus differed with him so widely by nature that the two could not long pursue a peaceful course. Erasmus had mercilessly attacked the lives of the monks in his famous "Praise of Folly," but he was unalterably opposed to conflict with the ecclesiastical authorities and carefully avoided any attack upon ecclesiastical doctrines. To Luther his attitude seemed cowardly. Doctrinal differences added fuel to a flame which was already burning brightly and the two became open enemies.

Among those who had reformation at heart was Ulrich von Hutten. Like Erasmus he was

a brilliant critic of the corruption of the Church, but his motive was that of the German patriot who longed to cut the cord which bound his nation to Rome. Upon the publication of Luther's "Address to the Nobility of the German Nation," which expressed so many of his convictions, Von Hutten and other knights of his own way of thinking hailed Luther as one of themselves. Offering their protection, they hovered about Worms during the Diet, determined to defend Luther with their lives.

But the spirit of the two men was different; the sword of Von Hutten was the sword of steel and the sword of Luther was the sword of the spirit. Von Hutten was interested in the unification and independence of the German nation, Luther in the spread of the true gospel. Nevertheless, each aided the other.

During the stay of Luther in the Wartburg, his doctrines had spread rapidly and steadily. This expansion continued until the Peasants' War put a check upon it. The efforts of the Popes who succeeded Leo X to stamp out the Lutheran heresy failed. At the Diet of Nuremberg in 1524 the Protestant estates demanded a free council of the Church to meet at Spires. At Spires in 1526 a decree was passed by which

each state of the Empire was to act in matters of faith "as it could answer to God and the Emperor." Individual liberty of conscience was not yet attained, but a tremendous stride had been made in its direction. Many rulers accepted the new religion, some because they sincerely believed it, others because of political ambitions. For the most part the northern states accepted, the southern rejected it.

CHAPTER VI

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE

In the midst of his anxiety about the Peasants' War and his difficulties with Erasmus, Luther took a step which pleased some of his friends, displeased others, and startled all. He had long since declared that vows of celibacy were void, and now he determined to marry. He declared that only fools and fanatics thought marriage a reproach, and pointed to "Abraham, David, Isaiah, Peter, Paul, and all the patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, as well as many holy martyrs and bishops" as examples of pious men "who knew that God had made them men and were not ashamed to be and to be thought so and therefore considered that they should not remain alone." He was not carried away by admiration or affection for any particular person, since he had not decided who his bride should be.

Among those who had vowed themselves to the life of the cloister and who had been affected by the new teaching were the nuns in a convent at Nimbschen. Of these, twelve decided to

escape. Among them was Catharine von Bora, a pious and modest young woman of good education, who at the age of five had been consigned to the cloister and who at the age of fifteen, responding naturally to the influences about her, had been consecrated as a nun.

Nine of these young women came, destitute and poorly clad, to Wittenberg. Before long all were provided for either by marriage or in other ways, except Catharine, who went to live in the home of a former burgomaster. She was not long without admirers, or, indeed, without love affairs. Not beautiful in feature, she possessed the greater attractiveness of a good mind, much more education than most young women of her age could boast of, and a practical acquaintance with all the lore of housekeeping and even of farming.

That Luther had for a long time not the least intention of marrying "Katie," as he afterwards called her, is shown in his active interest in her possible marriage first to a rich young man who was in love with her and later to another suitor. Finally, appreciating her ability and her many attractive qualities, and with the calm mind of a man of forty-one rather than the impetuous passion of youth, Luther married her himself on the evening of June 13, 1525, at the Black

Cloister. In his own words, "I was not carried away by passion, for I do not love my wife that way, but esteem her as a friend." Two weeks later the wedding festivities were held with many guests, among them old Hans and Margaret, who had embraced their son's evangelical faith and who now rejoiced greatly. To the newly married pair the Elector, the town, and the university sent presents.

The marriage brought to Luther great happiness. Katie put to use all her housewifely skill and the Black Cloister, which had for so many years sheltered an unnatural assemblage of men, became the comfortable abode of a Christian family. Katie cared for her husband with the most tender anxiety; she administered his affairs admirably, and truly loved him. For her and her energy and ability Luther had wholehearted admiration. "I would not change my Katie for France and Venice," said he, "because God has given her to me, and other women have much worse faults, and she is true to me and a good mother to my children." "I am rich, God has given me my nun and three children: what care I if I am in debt, Katie pays the bills."

There grew in the hearts of the late-wedded pair, not merely respect and admiration for each

other, but a true and deep affection which was not without the romance of early youth.

To them were born six children, — Hans, Elizabeth (who lived less than a year), Magdalene (who lived to be thirteen), Martin, Paul, and Margaret. Though Luther was almost middle-aged when the oldest of his children was born, and though his life was filled with important affairs, he made himself their companion and playfellow. During an absence from home, he wrote little Hans a letter which shows the tenderness and skill with which he adapted a great truth to the mind of a child: —

"Grace and peace in Christ, dear little son. I am glad to hear that you are studying and saying your prayers. Continue to do so, my son, and when I come home I will bring you a pretty present.

"I know a lovely, pleasant garden where many children are; they wear golden jackets and gather nice apples under the trees and pears and cherries and purple plums and yellow plums, and sing and run and jump and are happy and have pretty little ponies with golden reins and silver saddles. I asked the man who owned the garden whose they were. He said, 'They are the

children who say their prayers and study and are good.' Then said I: 'Dear man, I also have a son whose name is Hans Luther; may he come into the garden and eat the sweet apples and pears and ride a fine pony and play with these children?' Then the man said: 'If he says his prayers and is good, he may come into the garden and Phil and Justy too, and when they all come they shall have whistles and drums and fifes and dance and shoot little cross-bows.' Then he showed me a fine large lawn in the garden for dancing, where hang real golden whistles and fine silver cross-bows. But it was yet early and the children had not finished eating and I could not wait to see them dance, so I said to the man: 'My dear Sir, I must go and write at once to my dear little Hans about all this, so that he will say his prayers and study and be good, so that he may come into the garden, and he has an Auntie Lena whom he must bring with him.' Then the man said; 'All right, go and tell him about it.' So, dear little Hans, study and say your prayers and tell Phil and Justy to say their prayers and study too, so you may all come into the garden together. God bless you. Give Auntie Lena my love and a kiss from me.

"Your loving father,

"MARTIN LUTHER."

The "Aunt Lena" alluded to was Katie's aunt, who had been like her an inmate of the convent of Nimbschen and who became a valued member of Luther's household.

In the education of his children Luther took a deep interest. In their minds and childish ways, he found a never-ending store of illustrations. "We must rejoice in the Lord, but such a joy will often lead us astray, too. David had to endure many a temptation until he turned to the fear of God and remained therein. Therefore he says in the Second Psalm, 'Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling.' They go together — joy and fear. My little Hans can do it before me, but I cannot do it before God. If I sit and write and Hans sings a song over there and plays too noisily, I speak to him about it and he sings more quietly with care and reverence. So God will have us always joyful, with but fear and honor to him."

The family in the Black Cloister was not limited to Luther's own immediate kin. Anxious to improve her husband's estate, Katie took student boarders. Besides there were many guests, among them at various times twelve nieces and nephews, and needy folk of all kinds. No matter how crowded the Black Cloister, there

was always room for one more needy person; no matter how pressed for room the family table, another plate could quickly be set.

The students and guests, both regular and irregular, took constant note of all that Luther said. This material when collected became his "Table Talk." It is not uniformly valuable as a record of historical facts, but is invaluable as a revelation of the man Luther. Expressions of the most sublime spiritual emotion appear beside humorous accounts of household events or contemporary happenings. The variety of the affairs upon which he was consulted as well as the amusement with which he regarded the self-appointed amanuenses are shown in an incident which one of them recorded.

"After the doctor had gone to his room for the night, a messenger came with a note from the widow of a pastor of Belgern with a request for a husband. Luther said to the messenger: 'She is of age and must look out for herself; I cannot help her.' When the messenger had gone, he laughed and said to me: 'For Heaven's sake, Schlaginhaufen, write that down too. Is n't it a nuisance? They must think I am a matrimonial agent. Fie on you, old world! Friend, write it down and mark it!'"

Overzealous as the amanuenses sometimes were in recording conversations with which a later age has been impatient, they recorded much without which our picture of the man would be incomplete. Over and over in various ways and in simple language, at the family table and in family gatherings, Luther expressed those principles which he had declared in his books and sermons.

"The world does not know the hidden treasures of God. It cannot be persuaded that the maid working obediently and the servant faithfully performing his duty, or the woman rearing her children are as good as the praying monk who strikes his breast and wrestles with his spirit."

"The principal study of theology is to learn of Christ and know Him well."

"Since our Lord God has made this transient kingdom, the sky, the earth and all things in them, so beautiful, how much more beautiful will he make the eternal kingdom."

"How wonderful it is that God is so rich! He gives enough, but we don't appreciate it. He gave to Adam the whole world, but that was nothing; what he cared about was a single tree, and so he must ask why God had forbidden it

to him. It is the same to-day. God has given us enough to learn in His revealed Word, but we leave that and seek after his hidden will, which, however, we are unable to learn. Therefore it is no more than right if in acting thus we are utterly ruined."

Music, in Luther's opinion, was one of the greatest gifts of God to mankind. In the Black Cloister the family sang not only in the evening, but at meals, both secular and sacred songs. Singing not only drove away care, but even the devil himself "flees from the sound of music as he does from the exhortation of religion." Music, said Luther, should be taught to young people and should be supported by the State, "for the preservation of the arts as well as of the laws is the work of monarchs." He deplored the fact that while there were so many fine secular poems and songs there were so few fine spiritual songs. This need he did his best, both by his own efforts and by the encouragement of others, to supply. He said that if David were to arise from the dead he would be astonished at the progress that had been made in music. With what joy would Luther have hailed the master of all modern musicians, John Sebastian Bach, who was two centuries later to

raise Lutheran music and all music to a height never before attained or since surpassed!

For one of the members of his household, a devoted servant, Wolfgang Sieberger, Luther wrote a letter which reveals his playful humor. It pretended to come to Luther from the birds which Wolfgang tried to snare.

"We thrushes, blackbirds, finches, linnets, goldfinches and all other pious, honorable birds, who migrate this Winter over Wittenberg, give your kindness to know, that we are credibly informed that one Wolfgang Sieberger, your servant, has conceived a great wicked plot against us, and has bought some old, rotten nets, very dear to make a fowling-net out of anger and hatred to us. He undertakes to rob us of the freedom God has given us to fly through the air, a thing we have not deserved of him. All this, as yourself can imagine, is a great trouble and danger to us poor birds, who have neither houses nor barns nor anything else, and so we humbly and kindly pray you to restrain your servant, or, if that cannot be, at least to cause him to strew corn on the fowling-net in the evening and not to get up in the morning before eight, so that we can continue our journey over Wittenberg. If he will not do this but keeps on

wickedly seeking our lives, we will pray God to plague him, and instead of us to send frogs, locusts and snails into the fowling-net by day and at night to give him mice, fleas, lice and bugs so that he will forget us and leave us free. Why does he not use his wrath and industry against sparrows, swallows, magpies, crows, ravens, mice and rats? They do you much harm, rob and steal corn, oats and barley even out of the houses, whereas we only eat crumbs and a stray grain or two of wheat. We leave our case to right reason whether he has not done us wrong. We hope to God, that as many of our brothers and friends escaped from him, we too, who saw his dirty old nets yesterday, may escape from them.

"Written in our lofty home in the trees with our usual quill and seal.

"'Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap nor gather into barns; yet our Heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?'"

The years brought grief as well as joy to the Luther family. The death of the baby Elizabeth was truly mourned and the death of Magdalene almost prostrated the mighty reformer. Of her he said, "God has given no bishop so great

a gift in a thousand years as he has given me in her." Both Luther and his wife had serious illnesses and Luther's health failed steadily. Never comfortable, he was often visited by torturing pain in which he prayed that his life might end. The death of his father in 1530 and of his mother in 1531 caused him keen sorrow. If the discipline of his youth was ever resented, the resentment was long since forgotten. "Now I am sorrowful," he wrote, "for I have received tidings of the death of my Father, that dear and gentle old man whose name I bear, and although I am glad for his sake that his journey to Christ was so easy and pious and that, freed from the monsters of the world he rests in peace, nevertheless my heart is moved to sorrow. For under God I owe my life and bringing-up to him."

In joy and sorrow, in sickness and health, whether affairs were moving smoothly along or whether vindictive enemies or rebellious servants annoyed and angered him, Luther continued his hard work, teaching, preaching, and attending to a large correspondence and to multitudinous affairs of greater or less importance.

His popularity as a teacher did not abate. Until the day of his death he employed that simplicity of speech which he felt to be one of the

chief requirements for a good teacher. His interest in his students did not end with the delivery of the lecture, for he took great pains to discover whether the lessons were really understood. Though he might be impatient with the Papist, he was always patient with youth. Said he: "Some masters rate the proud youngsters to make them feel what they are, but I always praise the arguments of the boys, no matter how crude they are, for Melanchthon's strict manner of overturning the poor fellows so quickly displeases me. Every one must rise by degrees, for no one can attain to true excellence suddenly."

Luther's busy pen produced in all four hundred and twenty works which range in size from small pamphlets to large books. Indifferent for the most part to his style, anxious only to make his thought clear, he is the finest writer of his age and one of the finest writers of all time.

In order that the doctrines of the Church might be easily comprehended, he prepared the Large and Small Catechisms in which the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer were expounded clause by clause, the sacraments of baptism and the eucharist were explained, and various forms of prayer were given. Of the two the Small Catechism

is the greater. Avoiding all polemics, all disputation, all attacks upon those who had perverted the truth, Luther translated into the simple language of children and of unlearned men the great truths of the gospel, and produced thereby one of his most enduring works. To the simplicity, beauty, and truth of this "layman's Bible," as Luther called it, many have testified, none more eloquently than the historian Von Ranke. Said he: "It is as childlike as it is profound, as comprehensible as it is unfathomable, simple and sublime. Happy he whose soul was fed by it, who clings to it! He possesses an imperishable comfort in every moment; under a thin shell, a kernel of truth sufficient for the wisest of the wise."

The Small Catechism had at once an enormous circulation. Edition after edition was printed until in less than forty years a hundred thousand copies had been sold. The claim of Lutherans, that next to the Bible it is the most widely translated and circulated book in the world, is probably justified.

In 1532 Luther completed his greatest work, the translation of the Bible which he had begun with the translation of the New Testament at the Wartburg in 1521. The translation of the

Old Testament was begun in 1522 and was published in four parts. Luther was assisted by Melanchthon, and two other scholars, Aurogallus and Rorer, and when all was finished a revision was made with the additional aid of Cruciger, Bugenhagen, and Jonas.

The work was much more difficult than that on the New Testament, even with the able assistance of other scholars. Luther made humorous comment upon its difficulties. "We have so much trouble translating Job, on account of the grandeur of his sublime style, that he seems to be much more impatient of our efforts to turn him into German than he was of the consolations of his friends." Again: "I am now at work translating the Prophets. How hard it is to make the Hebrew writers speak German! They withstand our efforts, not wishing to give up their native tongue for a barbarous idiom, just as the nightingale would not change her sweet song to imitate the cuckoo whose monotonous note she abhors."

The virtues of the New Testament translation are the virtues of the Old. Sound in scholarship, noble in style, free in idiom, yet faithful to the original, the German Bible remains Luther's greatest monument.

CHAPTER VII

THE GROWING CHURCH

JUST as Luther, though he towered above all the men of his time, was but one of many who felt the corruption and needs of the Church, so the Lutheran Church, though first in time and largest in numbers, was but one of the churches in which the Reformation took shape. If there were those who hoped that the whole Christian world would become Lutheran in the sense in which it had been Roman Catholic, they soon learned that their hopes were vain. Even in Germany the Reformation did not remain within the exact mould which Luther designed. Deeply interested in the religious unification of Germany, firmly fixed in his own religious opinions, he demanded entire agreement with his views and resented bitterly the inability of others to see exactly as he saw.

Among those who differed with him was the Swiss reformer, Ulrich Zwingli, who had begun his work independently. He rejected Luther's doctrine of the real presence in the Lord's Supper and made of it merely a memorial feast. To

Luther who believed that in this doctrine was embodied one of the most sacred assurances of God's continued presence among mankind, Zwingli's teaching was intolerable. Moreover, Zwingli cherished political plans which looked forward to an alliance against the Pope. Luther was wholly opposed to armed resistance — here was another irreconcilable difference. Zwingli's doctrines spread not only through Switzerland, but to Luther's displeasure into South Germany as well. Between him and Zwingli a sharp correspondence was begun which grew into large volumes.

In 1529 the Catholic majority in a second Diet at Spires reversed the action of 1526. At once five evangelical princes, including the Elector of Saxony and Philip the Landgrave of Hesse, together with the representatives of fourteen free cities, offered a formal protest, refusing to abide by the new decision. Subsequently in order to unite the protesting forces, who from this time were called "Protestants," Philip called a meeting at Marburg to discuss the differences of opinion with the hope that Luther and Zwingli might come to an agreement and make common cause against the Papacy.

The Marburg Colloquy resulted only in an

amicable statement of those points on which the reformers agreed. The chief question — that of the Lord's Supper — was left undecided. Two years later Zwingli accompanying the Protestant forces as chaplain perished in a battle between the Catholic and Protestant cantons of Switzerland. Eventually the Germans who had been influenced by the doctrines of Zwingli returned to their fellowship with Luther, signing the Wittenberg Concordia in 1536.

Busy with wars, the Emperor, since the Diet of Worms in 1521, had been able to pay but little attention to his German subjects and their annoying religious questions. Now, in 1530, he determined to settle once for all their disputes, and summoned a Diet to meet at Augsburg. The Wittenberg theologians, among them Luther and Melanchthon, set forth at once, going as far as Coburg on the southern border of Saxony, beyond which they dared not proceed without a safe-conduct from the Emperor. In the middle of April safe-conducts arrived for all the party but Luther, who had to stay behind. He was provided with a royal abode in the castle of Feste Coburg, where for six months he worked and watched the proceedings of the Diet from afar.

The Diet decided to take up first of all the religious question. Melanchthon had prepared at great pains an official statement of the doctrines of the reformers which is known as the "Augsburg Confession," and which remains to this day the chief and universally accepted symbol or confession of the Lutheran Church. The theology of the Confession is Luther's, the form Melanchthon's. In it are exhibited the learning for which Luther so ardently admired his friend, his keenness, his ability to state with simplicity and clearness abstract principles, and finally all his tact as a mediator. Luther's distance from the Diet and the expedition with which the final form had to be decided upon made it impossible for Luther to see it when it was entirely completed. Of an earlier and rough draft he said, "I have read over Master Philip's Apology. I know not how to improve or change it, nor would it become me, since I cannot move so softly and gently."

Though the session at which the Confession was read was secret, the fact that it was read at all gave Luther the deepest satisfaction as he contrasted the occasion with his own appearance alone and surrounded by enemies nine years earlier. Said he: "Our enemies certainly

did their best to prevent the Emperor allowing it to be read, and they did succeed in preventing its being read in the public hall before all the people. But the Emperor heard it before all the princes and estates of the Empire. I am overjoyed to be living at this hour, when Christ is openly confessed by so many in a great public assembly and with so good confession."

For many weeks discussion and negotiation continued. The opposition of the Catholic party, the differences of opinion among the reformers themselves, the growing certainty that hopes of agreement were vain plunged the reformers into despair.

From the heights of Feste Coburg Luther wrote encouragement and cheer: —

"I have recently seen two miracles. The first was, that as I looked out of my window, I saw the stars and the sky and the whole vault of heaven, with no pillars to support it; and yet the sky did not fall and the vault remained fast. But there are some who want to see the pillars and who would like to clasp and feel them. And when they are unable to do so they fidget and tremble as if the sky would certainly fall in, simply because they cannot see and feel the pillars under it. . . .

"Again I saw great, thick clouds roll above us, so heavy that they looked like great seas, and I saw no ground on which they could rest nor any barrels to hold them and yet they fell not on us, but threatened us and floated on. When they had passed by, the rainbow shone forth, the rainbow which was the floor that held them up. It is such a weak, thin little floor and roof that it was almost lost in the clouds and looked more like a ray coming through a stained glass window than like a strong floor, so that it was as marvelous as the weight of the clouds. For it actually happened that this seemingly frail shadow held up the weight of water and protected us. But some people look at the thickness of the clouds and the thinness of the ray and they fear and worry. They would like to feel how strong the rainbow is, and when they cannot do so they think the clouds will bring on another deluge."

The willingness of some of the reformers to make some concessions did not bring about agreement. Luther from his castle refused to compromise, saying that harmony was impossible unless the Pope abolished the Papacy. The Catholic party saw that even with the concessions which Melanchthon and his friends

at the Diet were willing to grant, there could be no agreement. The Diet finally declared that the Augsburg Confession was rejected and that the heretics must recant. If they would not recant, they must be coerced.

Among the scores of letters written by Luther from Feste Coburg were many which expressed in beautiful language his love of nature. The birds and their habits were always a source of pleasure, not only for their own graceful or amusing ways, but for their resemblance to mankind. To his table companions he wrote from Feste Coburg a description of those outside his window: —

"I would have you know that we, namely, Veit Dietrich, Cyriac Kaufmann, and I, did not press on to the Diet of Augsburg, but stopped to attend another Diet here. There is a coppice directly under our windows, like a little forest where the daws and crows are holding a diet; they fly to and fro at such a rate and make such a racket day and night that they all seem drunk, soused and silly. I wonder how their breath holds out to bicker so. Pray tell me have you sent any delegates to these noble estates? For I think they must have assembled from all the world. I have not yet seen their

emperor, but nobles and soldier lads fly and gad about, inexpensively clothed in one color; all alike black, all alike gray-eyed, all alike with the same song, sung in different tones of big and little, old and young. They care not for a large place to meet in, for their hall is roofed with the vault of the sky, its floor is the carpet of green grass, and its walls are as far as the ends of the world. They do not ask for horses and trappings, having winged chariots to escape snares and to keep out of the way of man's wrath. They are great and puissant lords, but I have not yet learned what they have decided upon. As far as I can gather from an interpreter, however, they are for a vigorous campaign against wheat, barley, oats, and all kinds of corn and grain, a war in which many a knight will do great deeds. So we sit here in the diet and spend time agreeably seeing and hearing how the estates of the realm make merry and sing. It is pleasant to see how soldierly they discourse and wipe their bills and arm themselves for victory against the grain. I wish them good luck — to be all spitted on a skewer together. I believe they are in no wise different from the sophists and papists who go for me with their sermons and books all at once; I see by the example of the harsh-voiced

daws what a profitable people they are, devouring everything on earth and clattering loud and long in return.

"To-day we heard the first nightingale, who could hardly believe it was April."

To consider the dangers which seemed to threaten them, the Protestant princes assembled at Schmalkald in December and formed an alliance for mutual protection. Luther protested against any resort to arms to defend the Protestant doctrines. The alarm and despair of the reformers was dispelled when the day set for recantation passed and no coercive steps were taken against them. In July, 1532, the Religious Peace of Nuremberg bound both sides to peace until a council of the Church should be called. The truce made it possible for the Reformation teaching to spread more widely. Old rulers died and younger men, filled with the spirit of independence and open to the new doctrines, took their places. In 1539, Luther had the satisfaction of preaching in Leipsic where he had debated with Eck and which had been long ruled by an enemy of Protestantism.

As the evangelical doctrines spread, the League of Schmalkald became more powerful. When a new Pope, Paul III, ascended the throne, he sent

to Germany a representative to arrange for an ecumenical council at which the question of heresy was to be considered. The council was finally summoned to meet at Mantua in May, 1537. In order that they might come to an agreement as to their course of action, the Protestants met once more at Schmalkald. For this meeting Luther drew up a confession which was very different in spirit from the Augsburg Confession. Luther had no desire to conciliate. His articles were, however, not adopted, though later they found a place among the Confessions of the Lutheran church. Instead, in his absence on account of a serious attack of illness, the Augsburg Confession was reaffirmed. It was decided that the Pope's invitation should not be accepted and it was accordingly returned unopened. At last, separation from the Papacy was complete.

Luther's illness greatly alarmed his friends and fellow reformers. The attack was accompanied by intense suffering which he bore with fortitude. Believing that he was about to die and longing to die in his beloved Saxony, he set out for home. On the way he grew better and his disciple Schlaginhaufen galloped back to Schmalkald to encourage the reformers and to annoy

the papal legate with the news of his improvement. A period of weakness followed, during which Luther believed once more that he would die and he dictated messages to his friends and to his wife. Once more, however, he rallied and in a few days was able to begin the last stage of his journey and ere long to be at work.

Luther's mind was not given solely to political or religious problems. To him hundreds of questions were submitted relating to almost all phases of human life. Among those connected with marriage the most important and the most far-reaching in its consequences was that of Philip, the Landgrave of Hesse, one of the chief supporters of the Protestant cause. Philip, who had been disappointed in his marriage, had contracted a second and secret marriage, his wife being still living. This had been done with the reluctant consent of the reformers. The warmest of Luther's admirers does not justify this procedure, but laments it as a serious blunder, to be explained only upon the ground that Luther was still entangled in some of the casuistic distinctions of the mediæval Church. In the hope of reclaiming the Landgrave from a dissolute life he consented to that which he considered a lesser evil. To him the

divorce which was one alternative to this second and bigamous marriage, was a horror; the other alternative, a life of sin, was an equal horror. The condition which he attached to his consent, that the marriage be kept secret, exhibits none of the sound sense with which Luther met all other questions in his life. To Melanchthon the error brought remorse which was almost fatal. Luther, with a more robust conscience, refused to suffer for an act which had been done according to his conscience.

CHAPTER VIII

LAST YEARS AND DEATH

Worn by his early hardships and austerities, exhausted by the incessant labors of his later years, Luther grew old before his time. The diseases which had long troubled him became more torturing; chronic aches turned now to acute misery. More and more earnestly he longed to lay aside "this useless, worn-out, exhausted tabernacle." He wrote in 1541, "On Palm Sunday the tumor reached my ear and attacked not only my head, but my soul, so that the intolerable anguish forced tears from my eyes (though I do not easily nor often weep), and I said to the Lord: 'May these pains cease or may I die.' I could not have borne that terrible fight with nature two full days, but on the second day the tumor broke. Now the winds of all the seas and all the forests blow through my head, so that I can hear nothing unless it is shouted at me. At least I have the advantage of being able to read and write even if I cannot sleep as I used to."

In spite of almost unbearable suffering, his extraordinary diligence was but little diminished.

Though he took no active part in the various conferences by which it was hoped that Catholicism and Protestantism might come to a harmonious agreement, he constantly advised and directed by letter. No whit of his old passion for truth was lost nor had his hatred of those who opposed it abated in the least. From his pen there continued to pour letters, pamphlets, and books. Two years before his death he wrote of the plans which he had made and those which others had made for him: —

"You often urge me to write a book on Christian discipline, but you do not say where I, a weary, worn, old man can get the leisure and the health to do it. I am pressed by writing letters without end; I have promised our young princes a sermon on drunkenness; I have promised certain other persons and myself a book on secret engagements; to others one against the sacramentarians; still others beg that I shall omit all to write a comprehensive and final commentary on the whole Bible."

A month before his death he described with characteristic vividness and humor himself and his activities: —

"Old, decrepit, sluggish, weary, worn out, and now one-eyed, I write to you. Now that I am

dead — as I seem to myself — I expect the rest I have deserved to be given me, but instead I am overwhelmed with writing, speaking, doing, transacting business, just as though I had never done, written, said, or accomplished anything."

His physical weakness and suffering rose more and more like a dark glass between him and the world. The results of his struggle against the Papacy now seemed less valuable to him than a few years before, and he considered the moral conditions in Germany and in Wittenberg especially to be bad. Once he left Wittenberg, meaning never to return, but was persuaded by his distressed friends to change his mind.

The death of thirteen-year-old Magdalene in 1542 was another cause of the depression and sadness of his latter years. From her birth, which followed closely upon the death of his first daughter, Elizabeth, Luther had loved her dearly. The strong man, who dared to attack the greatest potentates and the most firmly established of human convictions, knelt beside the child's bed weeping bitterly.

In December, 1545, the Counts of Mansfield asked Luther's services in settling a dispute between them. The fact that he had been born in their dominions and the existence of a warm

personal friendship with them moved Luther to accept the office of mediator. In spite of wretched health and the bitter winter weather, he left at once with Melanchthon for Mansfield. On account of the frail health of Melanchthon, the work could not be completed and the party returned home. Late in January, when Melanchthon was still unable to leave Wittenberg, Luther set forth again, accompanied by his three sons and one of the young men of his household. Delayed at Halle by floods, they finally reached Eisleben where the conference was held.

Greatly to Luther's joy the negotiations were successful. In his satisfaction with their progress he became more and more cheerful, even though his physical sufferings were acute. In the midst of his activity and pain, his heart turned constantly to the "dear Katie" whom he had left at Wittenberg, and to her on the 14th of February he wrote the last letter of many written her during this journey and the last indeed of his life: —

"Grace and peace in the Lord. Dear Katie, we hope to come home this week if God will. God has shown great grace to the lords, who have been reconciled in all but two or three points. It

still remains to make the brothers Count Albert and Count Gebhard real brothers; this I shall undertake to-day and shall invite both to visit me, that they may see each other, for hitherto they have not spoken, but have embittered each other by writing. But the young lords and the young ladies, too, are happy and make parties for fools' bells and skating, and have masquerades and all are very jolly, even Count Gebhard's son. So you see that God hears prayer.

"I send you the trout given me by the Countess Albert. She is heartily happy at this union.

"Your little sons are still at Mansfield. James Luther will take care of them. We eat and drink like lords here and they wait on us so well — too well, indeed, for they might make us forget you at Wittenberg. . . .

"A report has reached here that Doctor Martin Luther has left for Leipsic or Magdeburg. Such tales are invented by those silly wiseacres, your countrymen. Some say the Emperor is thirty miles from here, at Soest in Westphalia; some say that the French and the Landgrave of Hesse are raising troops. Let them say and sing; we will wait on God. God bless you.

"Dr. Martin Luther."

On the 17th of February, Luther signed the treaty which was drawn up between the two brothers. Early the following morning he became ill and his children and friends were hurriedly summoned. Before he lapsed into unconsciousness the record of his sayings were completed by the addition of his last words. Never had the faithful amanuensis written down sentences more filled with that faith in which he had lived: —

"O my heavenly Father, one God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, thou God of all comfort, I thank Thee that Thou hast given for me thy dear son, Jesus Christ, in whom I believe, whom I have preached and confessed, loved and praised, whom the wicked Pope and all the godless shame, persecute and blaspheme. I pray thee, dear Lord Jesus Christ, let me commend my soul to thee. O heavenly Father, if I leave this body and depart I am certain that I will be with thee forever and can never, never tear myself out of thy hands."

Last of all his friends asked him, "Reverend father, will you stand steadfast by Christ and by the doctrine you have preached?" — and Luther answered firmly, "Yes."

Before dawn he breathed his last in the town

of his birth. From it he had never wandered far, yet he had shaken the world.

The Counts of Mansfield, their admiration and affection for him deepened by the sacrifices made in their service, begged that he might be buried in Eisleben, but to this the Elector of Saxony would not give his consent. Borne back to the scene of his labors, accompanied by an honorable escort and greeted by mourning thousands, his body was carried, past the door upon which he had nailed his theses, into the castle church.

Katie survived her husband six years. Only a few of her letters have been preserved; among them is an expression of her grief: —

"Kind, dear sister! I can easily believe that you have hearty sympathy with me and my poor children. Who would not be sorrowful and mourn for so noble a man as was my dear lord, who much served not only one city or a single land but the whole world? Truly I am so distressed that I cannot tell my great heart sorrow to any one, and hardly know what to think or how I feel. I cannot eat or drink, neither can I sleep. If I had a principality and an empire, it would never have cost me so much pain to lose them as I now have that our Lord has taken from

me, and not from me only, but from the whole world, this dear and precious man."

The property left by Luther was first injured in war and was then involved in a costly lawsuit and lost, so that at the end of her life Katie was obliged to support herself by taking boarders in the Black Cloister. In 1552 she fled from Wittenberg on account of the plague and died and was buried at Torgau, far away from her home and the grave of her husband.

Of Luther's six children four grew to maturity and married. Martin died childless, Hans had one daughter who died without issue, Paul and Margaret have descendants now living.

Soon after Luther's death the conflict between the Catholic and Protestant divisions of the German Empire, which had so long threatened, came at last to a head. The horrors of religious war were fortunately spared to Luther, who, his work done, lay at peace. To his biography an account of the bitter strife which desolated Germany does not belong. We believe that the wise mind of Lincoln would have guided free of shoals the American nation through the Reconstruction dangers; it may be that with Luther living, the course of German history might have been changed. But this is hardly probable.

Luther's weapon was the sword of the spirit and not the sword of steel; a longer life would likely have brought him merely greater grief. More to the purpose is an account, now that four hundred years have passed since he stood before the church door at Wittenberg, of that which his work has accomplished.

The Church of the Reformation has extended far beyond the Germany in which it had its birth and is by far the largest of the Protestant churches. Denmark, Sweden, and Norway hold almost unanimously the religious doctrines laid down by the reformers, and the strength and activity of the American Lutheran Church prove the vitality and the adaptability of the Lutheran belief.

Luther's influence, moreover, far outreaches the bounds of the Lutheran church. Protestantism is his. His discovery of the way of salvation amid so much agony of spirit is a legacy which he has bequeathed not to one nation or time, but to all peoples of all ages. Phillips Brooks asks the question, Is Luther's Protestantism a failure or a success? and himself declares, in answer: "These centuries of Anglo-Saxon life made by the ideas of Luther answer the question. The Protestantism of Milton and of Goethe, of

Howard and of Francke, of Newton and of Leibnitz, of Bunyan and of Butler, of Wordsworth and of Tennyson, of Wesley and of Channing, of Schleiermacher and of Maurice, of Washington and of Lincoln is not a failure. . . . This at least is sure, that the great principles of Martin Luther's life must be the principles of every advance of man on to the very end. Always it must be by a regeneration of humanity. Always it must be by the power of God filling the soul of man. Always it must be religious. Always it must be God summoning man, man reaching after God. Always it must be the moralist and the mystic, conscience and faith, meeting in the single human here or in humanity at large, which makes the Reformation. And however it shall come, all human progress must remember Martin Luther."

Even the Roman Church which despises and condemns Luther owes to him a quickened life. Within the Church ecclesiastical training was improved, church government was reformed, the means of education were increased. The doctrines of Rome, however, remained unchanged. Indeed, upon those which Luther had denounced there was laid now an exaggerated emphasis.

It is wise to allow neither the enemies of a

man nor those who laud him with too fulsome praise to shape our opinions of his worth. Closely associated with Luther for many years, loving him and greatly beloved by him, differing with him at times, aware of his short-comings, disapproving of his violence of speech, Philip Melanchthon had above all other men the opportunity to form a true opinion of Luther and his work. Called to deliver over him a funeral oration, Melanchthon pronounced the eulogy with which a large part of the thinking world agrees: —

"Luther brought to light the true and necessary doctrine. That the densest darkness existed touching the doctrine of repentance is evident. In his discussion he showed what true repentance is, and what is the refuge and the sure comfort of the soul which quails under the sense of the wrath of God. He expounded Paul's doctrine which says that man is justified by faith. He showed the difference between the Law and the Gospel, between the righteousness of faith and civil righteousness. He also showed what the true worship of God is, and recalled the Church from heathenish superstition, which imagines that God is worshiped, even though the mind, agitated by some academic doubt, turns away

from him. He bade us worship in faith and with a good conscience, and led us to the one Mediator, the Son of God, who sits at the right hand of the Eternal Father and makes intercession for us. . . .

"He also pointed out other services acceptable to God, and so adorned and guarded civil life as it had never been adorned and guarded by any other man's writings. Then from necessary services he separated the puerilities of human ceremonies, the rites and institutions which hinder the true worship of God. And that the heavenly truth might be handed down to posterity he translated the Prophetical and Apostolic Scriptures into the German language with so much accuracy that his version is more easily understood than the commentaries.

"I do not deny that the more ardent characters sometimes make mistakes, but amid the weakness of human nature no one is without fault. But we may say of such an one what the ancients said of Hercules, Cimon and others: 'rough, indeed, but worthy of all praise.' And in the Church, if, as Paul says, he wars a good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience, he is to be held in the highest esteem by us.

"That Luther was such we do know, for he

constantly defended purity of doctrine and kept a good conscience. There is no one who knew him, who does not know that he was possessed of the greatest kindness, and of the greatest affability in the society of friends, and that he was in no sense contentious or quarrelsome. He also exhibited, as such a man ought, the greatest dignity of demeanor. He possessed 'an upright character, a gracious speech.'

"Rather may we apply to him the words of Paul: 'Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report!' . . .

"In the many grave deliberations incident to the public perils, we observed the transcendent vigor of his mind, his valour, his unshaken courage, where terror reigned. God was his anchor and his faith never failed him."

Such briefly told, is the life of Martin Luther, who next to the Divine Founder of the Church and his Apostles has done most to dignify and ennoble mankind. In his life is to be found no base motive of any sort. Here is courage which dared to scrutinize the claims of the most august

and powerful institution which the world has seen, and having discovered its weaknesses to declare them. Here is a passion for truth which laughs at the death of the body. Here is, above all, supreme faith in God. The courageous man may admire Luther, the man of intellectual independence may sympathize with him, but only he can truly understand him who has felt the weight of sin and an intense longing for absolution and peace. Luther would consider his life wasted if he were remembered only for his courage or for his service in liberating the human conscience from the shackles which bound it. His message to mankind is that "little gospel" which he rescued from obscurity and which brought comfort to his own heart: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." This was to him the truth which was to save the soul, this the truth which was to make men free.

THE END

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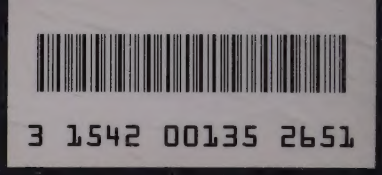
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